

THE
P R I N C I P L E S
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

COMPARED WITH THOSE OF
ALL THE OTHER RELIGIONS,

AND
SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY,

WHICH HAVE HITHERTO APPEARED IN THE WORLD.

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WHICH HAVE HITHERTO APPEARED IN THE WORLD:

WHEREIN
THE EXCELLENCY, AND SUPERIORITY, OF THE FORMER
Are clearly proved;

NOT ONLY
For conducting Mankind, as rational Creatures, through
this transitory Life;

BUT
For preparing them to enter into a Place of Happiness and
Bliss, in that immortal State which must necessarily follow.

*"Where is the Wise? where is the Disputer of this World? Hath
not God made foolish the Wisdom of this World? that no Flesh
should glory in his Presence."*

I COR. i. 20, 29.

By J. STEPHENS, Esq.

L O N D O N:
Printed for J. DODSLEY in Pall-mall,

M.DCC.LXXVII.



THE
P R I N C I P L E S
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION
COMPARED, &c.

AS I am writing in an enlightened age, very little apology will be necessary for entering into the discussion of a subject of this kind, wherein every human being is so essentially interested, which has been so much debated by the learned men of all ages, and almost of all nations, and respecting which, in consequence of such debates, even the most civilized part of mankind are, to this day, so much divided in their opinions.

It would be vanity for me to suppose, that any thing I can say will be sufficient to alter the opinion of any person with respect to this matter; and therefore shall think myself fully rewarded for my pains, if I can throw any new lights upon this important subject, so necessary to the happiness of all the human race, and which

has lately been so much controverted by a set of men, who pretend to reason philosophically thereon, and thereby to develop all the operations of nature, as well as the attributes of her omnipotent Creator; who pretend to know every thing, but prove nothing; who are affirmative, and dogmatic in their opinions; and whose greatest merit consists in the attempts which they make to turn the most sacred things into ridicule. They first doubt every thing, then dispute every thing; and at length not only disbelieve every thing, but endeavour to draw all the unwary and uninformed part of mankind into their way of thinking: and are so charmed with their own sufficiency, that they suffer themselves to be led away by the warmth and activity of their imagination, and neglect the cool and slow dictates of their reason. It is no easy matter to meet with two of them who agree in the same opinion; and, by examining their reasoning, it will be found, that they are deceived even in the first principles of philosophy, and attribute to physical causes, what they should have imputed to moral.

WHEN we take a cursory survey of all the systems of the ancient and modern philosophers, of the formation of the universe by chance, by necessity, and by I know not what force; of atoms of animated nature, of living matter, of materiality, and of a variety of other doctrines
of

of the different sects of the Grecian philosophers, no less contrary to the dictates of reason, than absurd in themselves, their presumption and folly must fill us with amazement; and shew us the insufficiency of the human understanding, to fathom the mysteries of the great Creator. Those philosophers would discover the first cause of every thing, when the human faculties are so limited, that we cannot comprehend the effects. Although they are ignorant of the motions of their own bodies, and even of those of the most simple insect which creeps upon the earth, they are so presumptuous as to imagine themselves capable of discovering the first cause of all things, and to develop the mysteries and attributes of the Supreme Being.—They are persuaded that they have a fund of real knowledge; but when it is analyzed, it turns out to be only the wild flights of their imagination:—they see themselves as so many atoms in the great system of nature, with the extent of which they are totally ignorant, and yet they are vain enough, not only to decide positively upon all its operations, but also for what purpose the great Creator formed every part thereof as we find it:—they bewilder themselves with general and abstracted ideas, and with the jargon of metaphysics, which have never yet discovered any one truth, which have filled true philosophy with absurdities, and which have been the cause of the greatest errors among mankind.

But that class of our modern philosophers, who would prove the materiality of the soul, have pushed their extravagances to such a degree, as to tell us that a human being does not think any more than a tree. They will not admit that there is any other order of beings in nature than sensitive beings; and all the difference between a man and a tree, is, that the man is a sensitive being which has sensations, and the tree a sensitive being which has none. To confute their opinions, by a long chain of arguments, and thereby to prove that mere matter cannot think, would be foreign to my plan, and I think very unnecessary; because it requires only to know that matter is capable of extension, and of divisibility, to prove to a demonstration that it cannot think; and therefore, when any of these philosophers shall endeavour to convince mankind, that trees and rocks think, we must regard all their subtle arguments as sophistical and absurd in themselves; and their attempts to debase human nature, and to allow sensation to stones and trees rather than admit that a human being has a soul, as the effects of a distempered imagination.—The more we reflect upon the nature of the human mind, and upon our thinking quality, the more we are led to regard these advocates for the materiality of the soul, as persons deaf, and depraved in all their actions:—they are deaf to the interior voice of nature and of reason, which cries aloud to them, but they cannot,

cannot, or they will not hear her; and they give the lie to themselves; because they prove, that no material being is active of itself; that a mere machine cannot think, neither has it any motion or figure, which is capable of producing reflection; and yet they shew us that there is something within themselves which would disengage itself from its material vehicle, and which would soar to the heavens; their sentiments, their desires, their inquietude, and even their pride, are not the effects of mere matter.

It is true, the ancient philosophers, at least those whose works have gained any credit among mankind, were more modest in their philosophical enquiries.—They were thereby led to a sense and acknowledgment of their own ignorance, of the imbecility of human understanding, and the incomprehension of things about us, as well as of those above us.—They directed their knowledge towards the forming their fellow-creatures for civil society, and for enjoying the good things of this life: for though many of them were convinced that there was a future state of rewards and punishments, they did not think themselves capable of giving mankind such particular instructions as were requisite for enabling them to obtain the former, or to avoid the latter;—as I shall hereafter more fully explain.—But the modern philosophy leads us to presumption, and to vain ostentation of the little we have learned, and makes us imagine that we know, or shall

know, not only all natural, but supernatural things; and that, in process of time, we shall become as wise as the angels.

Socrates, who has been held in great veneration, by all the true lovers of philosophy since his days, was declared, by the oracle of Delphos, to be the wisest of all men, because he professed that he knew nothing:—What would this oracle have said of one of our modern philosophers, who pretends to know every thing? This great philosopher likewise informed his countrymen, that, except the Supreme Being should reveal his will more perfectly to mankind, than they were capable of comprehending it, by the light of nature, or even than he was capable of doing it, they never could hope to please him, and to enjoy the blessings of a future state.—Plato likewise, who, from the light of reason only, and contrary to the received notions and prejudices of those days, clearly proved the immortality of the soul, has attempted to establish the same doctrine: and, in the description which he has given us of a just man, who, although covered with shame and disgrace, and held out as an object of scorn, by the presumptuous and vain-glorious sons of men, was worthy of the prize of virtue, and to be the example for all mankind to follow, has given us such a striking portrait of Jesus Christ, that the most prejudiced person cannot gainsay*.—Pliny

* Plato. Rep. Dial. 1.

the Elder, the most learned, and best-informed of all the Romans whose writings are handed down to us, concludes the uncertainty of human knowledge with, "*Constat igitur inter tanta incerta, nihil esse certi; præterquam hominem, nec miserius quicquam nec superbius.*"

Let us turn our attention towards the different parts of the globe, even among the most civilized people, as well as among the most barbarous, and examine their history, from the earliest ages, and see if we shall not find the opinion of those great heathen philosophers verified; and whether those presumptuous men, who would attempt to unfold all the mysteries of the Supreme Being, after so many ages of speculation are not at present as much in the dark respecting this matter, as the uninformed Indian, or African.

IN the early ages of the world, when mankind were in a state of ignorance and barbarity, those men who were endued with a greater degree of reason and reflection than their fellow-creatures, applied themselves to the invention of arts, and to the forming of laws and regulations for civil society; and were not only honoured during their lifetime, but, after their death, were worshipped as gods; as almost all mankind, of whom we have any particular history, were in those days in a state of the grossest idolatry. They supposed that the greatest honour, and even adoration, was due to those who had been the first au-

thors of any good and well-established civil government, whereby the native inhabitants of the country were drawn from a savage and brutal manner of living, to the safety and conveniency of civil society, to the enjoyment of property, and to the observance and obedience of laws and orders; which were followed by security, civility, industry, riches, and many kinds of arts. Such persons in those ages, who, excelling in those virtues, were attended by these fortunes, and left their respective countries under good constitutions of laws, and civil government; or who instituted excellent and lasting orders and frames of any political state, in what extent soever of country, or under what name soever of civil government, were obeyed as princes or lawgivers, during their lifetime, and afterwards were adored as gods. —It does not appear that they aspired after any thing more, or that they had any idea of a future state, or even of the existence of a great and Supreme Being, who created, and who governed all things.

From these sources, I am persuaded, may be deduced all the systems of theology, or idolatry, of the ancient Pagan world; at least, of all that part thereof which we find recorded in history: for, from taking a survey of ancient story, I think we may justly conclude, that Saturn was a king of Crete, and that he was driven out of that kingdom by his son. That Jupiter, after he had dethroned his father, conquered a great part of Greece; and having introduced the use of agriculture,

ture, of property, and civility, and established a just and regular kingdom, was by them adored as the chief of their gods. That his brother, sisters, sons, and daughters, were worshipped likewise for the inventions of things useful, necessary, or agreeable to human life. Neptune was worshipped for having invented the art of navigation; Vulcan, for that of forging brass and iron; Minerva, of spinning; Apollo, of music and poetry; Mercury, of manual arts and merchandize; Bacchus, for the invention of wine; and Ceres, of corn. But we have no history, at present, which informs us in what age this race of Saturn flourished in the world; although it is generally supposed, that it was soon after the peopling of this country by the descendants of Noah.—The same divine honours were rendered by the Egyptians to Osyris; in whose temple was inscribed, on a monument, that he had traversed the greatest part of the then known world, and every-where taught men all that he found necessary for the common good of civil society; by the Assyrians to Belus, the great founder of that kingdom, and the inventor of astronomy among the Chaldeans; by the original Latins to Janus, who introduced agriculture into Italy; and these three were worshipped as Gods, by those ancient and learned nations.—The next two, of the human race, whom we find displaying their talents upon the great theatre of life, and who were afterwards deified, were the Theban Hercules, and Theseus; both being greatly renowned,

nowned, throughout all Greece, for having freed their country from fierce and wild beasts, from robbers and spoilers, or from cruel and lawless tyrants. Theseus was also honoured as the founder of the more civilized state of Athens; which city began to flourish and grow great by his institutions; although his father had been before king of the scattered villages, or inhabitants of Attica.—In the same age likewise lived Minos, king of Crete, who, for the justness of his laws, and the greatness of his reign, gained the repute of being a son of Jupiter.—After the Trojan wars, Æneas having employed his utmost strength and abilities, in the defence of this famous city, saved his father, and the Trojan gods, gathered up the remains of his ruined country, sailed to Italy, and there founded a kingdom, which gave rise to the greatest empire in the world.—In the third century after this æra, Lycurgus formed the civil government of Sparta upon laws and orders so very different from those which were then practised in Greece, that there appeared to be more than human authority necessary to establish them; so that the Pythian priestess told him, that she was at a loss to know whether she should call him a god or a man. Indeed his civil and political institutions have been particularly celebrated by almost all the learned authors of antiquity.—The next great reformers of mankind, which we find recorded in the Pagan history, were Romulus and Numa; the first of whom,

whom founded the Roman city and state ; and the second polished the civil and religious orders of both to such a degree, that the original institutions of these two lawgivers continued as long as that state retained its lustre and government.—

Cyrus was the next great reformer which we find appearing upon the stage of life ; who not only freed his country from their servitude to the Medes, and erected the Persian empire upon the ruins of the Assyrian, but he adorned it with most excellent laws and constitutions. If we may judge from the portrait which Xenophon has given of this great man, he was a phænomenon in the Heathen world ; and it is certain, that his memory was always celebrated among the Persians, though not prosecuted by divine honours ; because that nation, even in those days, adored one Supreme God, without any representation or idol ; and in the next place the Sun, to whom alone they offered sacrifices. It is generally supposed, that they received their ideas of a Supreme God from the Indians ; who, at that time, followed the precepts of their great lawgiver, and the founder of their system of theology, Brachmah, because all their neighbouring nations, even the Israelites themselves, were, in those days, in a state of the grossest idolatry.

Although the scene of action, whereon those princes and lawgivers flourished, was confined to a very small part of the world ; yet, as it was the
then

then theatre of learning, their actions and fortunes are held out as the common examples of virtue and honour, and the reproaches of vice. The states wherein those wise and famous constitutions were displayed, made but a small part of the globe, and little notice has been taken of the other parts; which, though accounted barbarous by many celebrated authors, were perhaps less so than many of those kingdoms whose history those authors have handed down to posterity, and have as much right to give their voice in the decision of the important question, which I have stated, as those who have arrogated it wholly to themselves; as, upon enquiry, the wisdom, and duration, of their civil constitutions, and the examples of their law-givers, will be found to have equalled, or exceeded, all those I have before mentioned.

When we regard the map of the world, as it lies at present before us, since the great discoveries which have been made, during these three last centuries, we shall see what vast regions of inhabited country there are, which were no part of that ancient scene before mentioned; many of which were unknown to the ancients; and, although passing for barbarous, and much overlooked by many learned modern authors, I am persuaded will afford as much matter for speculation, as the other states so much celebrated in ancient history, for the excellency of their constitutions and laws, and for their respective systems of theology.—All that part of Asia, to the east of the Ganges, which was esteemed

teemed by the ancients as the boundary of the eastern world ; all the ancient Scythia, Arabia, the exterior parts of Africa, and almost all the great continent of America, with the manners and customs of their respective inhabitants, are, in some measure, known to us at present ; and, therefore, I shall take a brief survey of the systems of theology and morality, which have, at different times, been discovered among them.

THE great and ancient empire of China, which was formed of fifteen several kingdoms, and at a moderate computation contains one hundred millions of souls, was founded (as appears by their records, which were copied by the missionary Jesuits, and by them esteemed unquestionable and infallible) about four thousand years ago by Fohu ; who first brought them out of that state of nature in which the inhabitants of the Great Tartary heretofore lived, to live under a civil government ; introduced agriculture, marriage, the distinction of the sexes by different habits, with a variety of laws, and orders, for a regular government among them. He invented characters, and left several writings of morality, civil government, physic, and astronomy ; so that this king seems to have been the instituter of the Chineses political government.—But about two thousand and three hundred years since, lived Confuchee, or Confucius, the most learned, wise, and virtuous man, say the Chineses, that ever lived in this empire ; and for whom both the king and the
magi-

magistrates, of his time, as well as all those who have succeeded since, seem to have had the greatest veneration that has any-where been rendered to a mortal man. He wrote many tracts, and in them digested all the learning of the ancients, with the writings of Fohu, at least all that he thought necessary, or useful, to mankind, as individuals, or as members of civil society: it does not appear that he had any idea of a future state. His works were then received, and have ever since been regarded, with so great esteem and veneration, that none has questioned whatever he wrote, but admitted it as the truest and best rules for passing through human life, so that, to this day, it is enough in all arguments that Confucius has said it.

The writings of this great man, or at least the principal part of them, have been translated by the missionary Jesuits; as they are the source of all the Chinese learning, and seem to contain a body of ethics, or moral virtues, which are framed for the conduct of men's lives, their families, and their governments, but chiefly for the latter. The principal part of his reasoning seems to be calculated to prove, that no people can be happy but under good governments, and no governments happy but over good men; and that, for the felicity of mankind, all the men in a nation, from the sovereign to the meanest labourer, should endeavour to be good, wise, and virtuous, as far as his own thoughts, or the precepts of others, can inform him. The chief principles which he seems

to lay down, as a foundation to build upon, are, that every man should endeavour to improve, and to perfect, his own reason, to the greatest degree that he is capable of doing it, so that he may as seldom as possible turn from the law of nature, in the course and conduct of his life: that as this is not to be done without much speculation and enquiry, it is necessary that every man should apply himself to the study of philosophy; which teaches men what is good, and what is bad, either in its own nature, or for theirs; and, consequently, what rule of life is to be followed by all mankind, in their respective stations or capacities: that in this perfection of natural reason consists the perfection of the body and mind, and the supreme happiness of human beings; that the principal means to attain to this degree of perfection are to submit our passions to our reason, and not to will, or desire, any thing but what is consonant to reason, nor any thing that is not strictly agreeable to the good and happiness of our fellow-creatures, as well as of our own. For this purpose, he orders the constant practice of the several virtues so generally known, and agreed to, in the world; the principal of which he regards to be civility and gratitude. In fact, the whole tenor of his writings appears to be aimed only to teach mankind how to live and to govern well; how magistrates, parents, and masters, should govern, and how subjects, children, and servants should obey.

All these rules and instructions, for attaining to

wisdom and virtue, are discoursed by him with great compass of knowledge, with an apparent superiority of sense, and with aptness of similitudes and examples; so that this philosopher seems to have had an extraordinary genius, great learning and virtue, and to have been a lover of his country, and of mankind.

Upon these foundations and institutions, and by strictly adhering to the precepts and orders of Confucius, the empire of China seems to be framed, and policed, with the utmost force of human wisdom, reason, and foresight; so that, in practice, it is found to excel the very speculations of the greatest philosophers and lawgivers of all ages; which must be allowed by every person, who considers the vast extent, the opulence, and the populousness, of this country; the great improvements which they have made in all the useful arts and manufactures; the ease and facility with which it is governed; and the length of time this government has continued. No country in the world was ever known to be so well cultivated as the whole empire of China; and there is no state where honour and respect are paid to nobility and riches so much, as it is here to virtue and learning; which are equally regarded, both by the prince and by the people; particularly the learning which is founded upon Confucius's principles; and which is the high road to every degree of preferment in the state.

But, on the other hand, the high idea which

we may from hence be apt to conceive of the Chinese wisdom, knowledge, and civility, will be greatly lessened by the gross and sottish idolatry, which, as far as we can learn, has prevailed among them ever since the refinement of their government, notwithstanding all the wise and learned precepts of Confucius. It appears that the Chinese originally adored one great Being, which they called the Spirit of the World, and which they held to be eternal; and this without temples, idols, or priests: and some of their learned men are said to continue in the same system to this day; although the emperor, and all his great officers, and household, are allowed to offer sacrifices at certain times, at two idolatrous temples in the two imperial cities of Peking and Nanking; and all the mass of the people, and particularly the women, worship, after their manner, whatever idols belong to each city, village, or family; which have a multitude of priests and temples belonging to them: so that, in this respect, there is no part of the known world where the common people, and the women, appear to be in a more depraved and debased state, than in this otherwise civilized country. Indeed it has generally been observed, that, while mankind were in a state of simplicity, they adored only their primitive divinity, from whom they supposed they had received some essential benefits; but afterwards, when they became more learned, the most

civilized states, as well as the most barbarous, fell into the grossest irreligion and idolatry.

THE great empire of India, or Indostan, in former ages, produced a very wise and learned race of men, who were known by the name of Brachmans, and who were the priests and teachers of the system of theology which was then practised in this country; as well as the advisers of all the wise laws and regulations, which were made by the kings and governors of this empire. Those Brachmans declared themselves to be the disciples of a very extraordinary man, or, according to their doctrines, rather more than a mortal man, whom they called Brachma, or Brumma, and who was the great author of their religion; the particulars of which he laid down for their instruction, in a book called the Vidam, the original of which, according to Mr. Hollwell's account, is buried in the ruins of time; but several learned commentaries thereon, containing the mysteries of their religion, are still extant in that country, and have lately been translated into English: so that it will be needless for me to state them at large in this work, especially as they appear to be, in many respects, similar to those which were held in the highest esteem by the ancient Greek and Chaldean philosophers.—Those Brachmans were regarded with the greatest veneration, even in the days of Pythagoras, who was honoured, by the
Greeks,

Greeks, as the father of philosophy and of the virtues; and who, after having spent many years in study and conversation among the priests and wise men of Egypt, Memphis, Thebes, Heliopolis, Babylon, Crete, and Delphos, passed into India, to be fully instructed in the religion and wisdom of those oriental sages. What sort of mortals some of those must have been, that this great philosopher went so far to seek their instruction, I shall endeavour to point out by the few ancient accounts that are given of them; as those of the philosophers and sages of other countries occur more frequently in history.

Those men were all of one race, or tribe, which was kept chaste from any other mixture, and were dedicated wholly to the service of religion, to the study of wisdom, and to the council of their kings and governors. There was not only the greatest care taken of their birth and education, but even of their respective mothers, from the time of their conception; for when a woman among them was known to have conceived, the greatest attention was employed about her diet and entertainments, so far as to furnish her with pleasant ideas, and to compose her mind, in the most agreeable manner, during the time she was pregnant. The same care was continued with the Brachmans, during their instruction, in which, and their studies, and the discipline of their colleges, they spent above thirty years. The greatest part of their learning and institutions were unwritten, and only tradi-

tional among themselves—Their opinions in natural Philosophy, were, that the earth was round, that it had a beginning, and that it must have an end, but reckoned both by immense periods of time; that the Creator of it was a Spirit, which pervaded the whole universe, and was diffused through every part of it. They supposed this world to be a state of purgation, wherein certain inferior spirits, who had rebelled against their great Creator, were doomed to pass a limited time, confined in different material bodies, and afterward, were pardoned, or condemned eternally to certain punishments; and, therefore, they held the transmigration of souls, as one of the fundamental articles of their religion. They endeavoured to prevent all the diseases of the body, from which they imagined the perturbation of the mind, in a great measure, arose; and to compose the mind, by exempting it from all anxious cares; esteeming the troublesome and solicitous thoughts about past and future events to be like so many troublesome dreams, and no more to be regarded. They were perfectly indifferent about life and death, pleasure and pain. Their justice was very exact and exemplary, and their temperance so very great, that they lived upon nothing but vegetables; believing it to be a heinous fault to kill any thing that had animal life, to which they supposed some soul was annexed, undergoing its state of purgation. If they fell sick, they regarded it as such a mark of intemperance, that they would frequently die from
 shame;

shame; but many of them lived to a very great age, to one hundred and fifty, and some to two hundred years; to which undoubtedly their temperance greatly contributed.—It does not appear that they had any of the frightful idols, in those days, like to those which are found among them at present; although they adored a plurality of Gods; but their chiefest adoration was to that great Spirit whom they looked upon to be the father of all things.—Their wisdom was so highly esteemed, that some of them were always employed to advise their kings and governors, on all occasions, and to instruct them in justice and piety. Their fortitude was astonishing, in the enduring of all evils, of pain, and of death; as, during the time that they did their penances, some would stand, or sit, whole days together, without any motion, in the scorching sun; others would stand whole nights upon one leg, and holding up a heavy piece of wood or stone in both hands, without ever moving. They frequently ended their lives by their own choice, and not by necessity, in cases of sickness, or great misfortunes, or even upon a mere satiety of life, and most usually by fire, and taught their followers to do the same.

These were the Brachmans of India, by the most ancient accounts we find of them in history; and we may from hence perceive, that the priests, which are at present among the Gentoos, of the Brachman race, although degenerated, and fallen

into the grossest idolatry, have derived from them many of their customs and opinions, which are still very like to what they were two thousand years since.

I think it is very probable that, from these famous Indians, not only Pythagoras learned, and transported into Greece and Italy, the greatest part of his natural and moral philosophy, rather than from the Egyptians, as many have supposed, but that those of Democritus, who travelled into Egypt, Chaldea, and India, and whose doctrines were after improved by Epicurus, might have been derived from the same fountains; and that, long before them both, Lycurgus, who likewise travelled into India, brought from that country also the chief principles of his laws and political system: for we do not find any mention made of the transmigration of souls among the Egyptians, more ancient than the days of Pythagoras; on the contrary, Orpheus is said to have brought out of Egypt all his mystical theology, with the stories of the Stygian Lake, Charon, the infernal Judges, &c. which were made a part of the Pagan religion, so long observed by the Greeks and Romans: and it is obvious, that this was, in all respects, very different from the Pythagorean opinions, which, though they were long preserved among some of the succeeding philosophers, yet never were generally believed by either the Greeks, or the Romans.—Moreover, from what has been before observed, of the learning and opinions of the ancient

cient Brachmans, we shall not only discover among them all the seeds of the Grecian ethics, and institutions, introduced by Pythagoras, such as the transmigration of souls, the four cardinal virtues, the long silence enjoined his scholars, the propagation of their doctrines by tradition, rather than by letters, and the abstinence from all kinds of meat that had animal life; but the eternity of matter, with perpetual changes of form, the indolence of body, and the tranquillity of mind, introduced by Epicurus; — and, among the institutions of Lycurgus, the care of the education of children, even from their birth, the austere temperance of diet, the enduring pain and toil with patience and resignation, the neglect or contempt of life, the use of gold and silver only in their temples, the defence of commerce with strangers, and several other regulations established, by this great lawgiver, among the Spartans, seem to be all of Brachman original, and were different from any other religious or political institutions that ever appeared in Greece, either in that, or in any other age.

From all that we can discover of those oriental sages, therefore, I think it will be allowed that, for many centuries, they took the greatest pains to carry human knowledge, by every prudent method, to the highest degree that it was capable of being carried; and such an opinion had the greatest part of the inhabitants of the then known world of their wisdom, reason, piety, and univer-

fal learning, that the most learned men of those days, even the founders of the Grecian and Roman philosophy and morality, thought themselves not properly instructed, till they were admitted into their mysteries, and taught all their institutions. But when those sages directed their studies to discover the mysteries of the Supreme Being, by the force of their reason only, what did all their wisdom end in? Does it not appear that human understanding is not equal to the task? And that, after many centuries of application and study, they have verified the words of the apostle Paul, "That God has made foolish the wisdom of this world, that no flesh should glory in his presence." For we find that, since mankind have been more enlightened by the doctrines of Jesus Christ, all their system of theology was only the wild flights of their imagination; that it is disagreeable to human reason; and, like all the other systems of this kind, will either be totally rejected, or end in idolatry.

LET us turn our attention from hence towards the great continent of America, where we shall discover a people very different from those of whom I have been treating; a people who were in their native innocence and simplicity, when the Spaniards came among them; who, in many parts of the great empire of Mexico, had no thought of business, further than the most natural pleasures or necessities of life; and who spent their lives
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either in the most innocent entertainments, of hunting, fishing, or feasting, or in the most trifling amusements.—They lived at this time in a state of the most gross and cruel idolatry ; and were under the dominion of Montezuma, one of the most absolute and cruel tyrants that ever disgraced the human species. One of the principal tributes which he imposed upon the people, was, a certain number of men to be sacrificed every year, to abate the fury of an ugly deformed idol, which was set up in the great temple of Mexico. Such numbers of poor victims, as the emperor pleased, were laid upon every district, city, or province, who were chosen by lot, to satisfy the fury of their gods. But these taxes were frequently influenced by the priests ; who, when they saw a man wanting in respect to themselves, or in devotion to their abominable idols, would tell the emperor that the gods were hungry ; and thereupon the common tribute was immediately raised ; so that, according to the Spanish accounts, the very year that Mexico was by them invaded, there had been a sacrifice of above thirty thousand men to this cruel superstition. All those who have wrote the history of this country, represent their superstition so tempered with cruelty and human blood, that even the idolatrous nations of Europe and Asia could not regard them without horror.

But in a very different state was the empire of Peru, when it was first discovered by the Spaniards. It exhibited a civil and well-regulated government ;

government; framed from very wise laws and regulations, and from the principles of morality.—The founders of this empire, which, according to the history which they gave of themselves to the Spaniards, had been in a civilized state for eight hundred years, were Mango Copac, and his wife, who was likewise his sister, Coya Mama; who appeared first in that country near a great lake, which, for this reason, is still held sacred among them. Before this æra, the Peruvians are said to have lived with the beasts, joint tenants in the same caves and rocks, without any traces of orders, laws, or religion; without any other food than what they gathered from the trees or shrubs, or what animals they could catch, and of this they had no further provision than for present hunger; and without clothing. They secured themselves in holes of rocks or caves, from the fury of the wild beasts; and upon the tops of hills, if they were in fear of any fierce neighbours.—When Mango Copac and his wife came among them, as they were persons of great beauty, so they were adorned with such clothing as was afterwards constantly worn by the Ynca's; which name they gave themselves. They told the people, who first flocked about them, that they were the son and daughter of the Sun, and that their father, taking pity of the miserable condition that they lived in, had sent them down to reform them from the savage state they were then in, and to instruct them how to live in safety, and happily, by following

lowing such laws, customs, and regulations, as their father the Sun had formed for them, and ordered these his children to teach them.

The first great maxim which they taught their followers was, that every man should live by the rule of equity, *i. e.* that they should not do any thing to others, that they were not willing others should do to them; because it was contrary to reason and equity, to make one law for ourselves, and another for other people; and this was the great and fundamental principle of all their morality.—In the next place, they ordered all their followers, that they should worship the Sun, who was the common father and protector of the whole world, who gave life to all creatures, and made the plants and herbs grow for their food and support; and he shewed such love and care for the welfare of all his creatures, that he even went round the world every day, to inspect and provide for all that was upon it; and had sent these his two favourite children down among the Peruvians, who were the particular objects of his attention, to rule and to make them happy.—After this they taught them such arts as were most necessary for human life; as the man taught the people to sow the common Indian corn, at certain seasons, and to preserve it against others; to build houses against the inclemency of the air, and to secure them from the fury of the wild beasts; to form themselves into families by marriage; to clothe themselves, at least in such a manner as to cover the
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shame of their nakedness ; and to tame and nourish such creatures as would be useful for their sustenance : and the woman taught the Peruvian women, to spin and weave cotton, and the wool of certain beasts which they had among them. By these instructions and regulations, they were so generally believed in all they said, and so much esteemed for what they did and taught for the common utility, that they were followed by all the people who saw and heard them ; and obeyed like the children of the Sun, who were sent down from heaven to govern and instruct them.

Mango Copac had in his hand a rod of gold, about two feet long and one inch and half diameter, which, he said, he had received from his father, the Sun, with orders, that when he travelled northward from the lake, he should every time he rested, strike this rod into the earth ; and where at the first stroke it should go down to the very end, there he should fix the seat of his government, and build a temple to the Sun. This fell out to be in the rich soil of the vale of Cozco, where he founded that city which was the seat of government in the Peruvian Empire. He divided his company into two colonies, one of which he called the high Casco, and the other the low, and now began his legislative authority over them : every family under his dominion was registered ; and, through both these colonies, he instituted decurions, one over every ten families, another over fifty, a third over one hundred, a fourth over five hundred,

dred, and a fifth over one thousand ; and to this last he gave the title of Curaca, or governor. Every decurion was a judge, or arbiter, in small controversies, among those who were under his charge. They took care that every person was clothed, laboured, and lived, according to the regulations given them by the Ynca's, from their father the Sun ; one of the principal of which was, that no person who could work should be idle ; and that no person who could not work, from age, sickness, or any accidental cause, should want, but should be maintained by the others : and these regulations were so well observed, in the whole empire of Peru, that during the long race of the Ynca kings, no beggar was ever known ; and no woman ever went to see a neighbour but with her work in her hands, which she followed all the time the visit lasted. Moreover, every decurion, besides being a judge over those who were under his direction, was likewise their solicitor, if any of them were in want ; and was bound to keep a public register of all those who were born, and of all those who died, under his charge.—Every colony had one supreme judge, to whom the lower decurions remitted great and difficult cases ; and to whom, in criminal cases, the criminal appealed : but every decurion, who concealed any crime of those who were under his charge, above twenty-four hours, became guilty of it, and liable to the same punishment with the real offender.

The Ynca's likewise established a code of laws
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against robberies, murders, mutilations, disobedience to officers, and adulteries; for every man was allowed to have but one lawful wife, but he had the liberty of keeping as many women as he could. All their crimes were punished, either with corporal pains, or death, but generally with the latter; because, they observed, that all crimes, whether great or small, were of the same nature, and deserved the same punishment, if they were committed against the divine commands of the Sun; and that to punish any man in his property only, and to leave him alive, and at liberty, was to leave a wicked man more incensed, or necessitated, to commit new crimes. On the other hand, they never made a son answerable for his father's offences; but the judges remonstrated to him the guilt and punishment of them, for his warning or example.—These regulations were attended with such good effects, that sometimes a whole year passed without the execution of one criminal in the empire: but undoubtedly the disuse of other possessions than what were sufficient to produce the necessaries of life, and the eminent virtue, and great example, of their wise lawgiver, which seemed to have been transfused through his whole race, during the course of a long reign, contributed much to this great order in the state, as it is said no true Ynca was ever found guilty of, or punished for, any crime.

We have not any example in the history of the world, of a government being established, and continued,

continued, by greater virtue and severity; nor any ever gave greater testimonies, than that of the Ynca's, of an excellent institution, by the progresses and successes, not only in the propagation and extent of empire, but also in interior government, in force and plenty, in greatness and magnificence of temples and public works, and in all provisions necessary to the safety, utility, and happiness of human life: insomuch that the missionary Jesuits seemed to prefer the civil constitutions of Mango Copac to those of Lycurgus, Numa, Solon, Confucius, or any other celebrated legislators in the known world.

To every colony was assigned a certain extent of land, whereof one part was appropriated to the public worship of the Sun; a second to the support of the widows, orphans, poor, aged, and infirm; a third to the peculiar maintenance of every family, according to their respective numbers; and the fourth to the use of the Ynca. In this order the land was tilled with grain, and the produce laid up in several granaries; out of which it was distributed by officers appropriated for that purpose, according to the several uses for which it was designed, and new seed given out at the season for the new tillage.—No person was suffered to leave the colony or people he was born in without leave, nor to change the habit commonly used in it; by some parts or marks thereof, the people of each province were distinguished: neither was any person to marry out of it, nor any of the Ynca's to marry out of their own blood.—The reigning

Ynca was called Capa Ynca ; and he always married the first of his female kindred, either sister, niece, or cousin, to preserve the line the purest they could. Once every two years he assembled all the unmarried Ynca's, the men above twenty, and the women above sixteen years old, and there in public married all such as he thought fit, by joining each of their hands the one to the other. The same thing was done among the common people, in every colony, by their Curaca or governor.

By these, and other laws and institutions of this kind, Mango Copac first settled his government, or empire, in the colonies of Cozco, which were in time extended over many other colonies, by the great concourse of people who flocked about him from every part ; and who were not only allured by the divine authority of his orders, but by the sweetness and clemency of his reign, and by the happiness and felicity of all those who lived under it.—Indeed the whole system of the civil government of this race of the Ynca's was rather like that of a tender parent over his children, or a just and good-natured guardian over his pupils, than like that of a lord or sovereign over his slaves or subjects ; by which they came at length to be so honoured, and even adored, that it was like sacrilege for any common person so much as to touch an Ynca without his leave ; which was given, as a grace, to all those who served him well, or to such new subjects as submitted to him.

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After Mango Copac had extended his empire over all the country round Cozco, by the voluntary submission of the native inhabitants, as to a Being of a superior order, he assembled all his governors and officers, and told them, that the Sun, his father, had commanded him to extend his laws and dominions as far as possible, for the good and happiness of the human race; and, for that purpose, to go with armed troops to those remote parts which had not yet received them, and to reduce them to their observance; but not to hurt or offend any of those who would submit to him, and accept of the good and happiness which were offered them, by such divine bounty, and to distress such only as refused; without however killing any persons who did not attack them, and then to do it justly in their own defence.—With this intention, therefore, he raised a large body of troops, which he armed both with offensive and defensive weapons: and set officers over them, as he had done over the families in every colony; but he moreover added a general to every five thousand, and a director-general over every ten thousand.—With armies formed in this manner, he reduced many new provinces under his dominion, declaring to every people he approached, the same thing he had done to those who first came about him near the Great Lake; and moreover offering them all the benefits of the arts which he had taught, and of the laws and orders which he had formed; and the same protection and felicity

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which his former subjects enjoyed. Those who submitted were immediately received into the same rights and enjoyments with the rest of his people; but those who refused were distressed, and pursued by his forces, till they were necessitated to accept of his offers and conditions. He would not suffer his men to kill even those whom they pursued, before the danger and slaughter of his own troops grew otherwise unavoidable; then he suffered his forces to kill them without mercy, and not even to spare those who yielded themselves, after having so long and so obstinately resisted.— By these means, and by the length of his reign, he so far extended his empire, that he divided it into four great provinces, over each of which he appointed an Ynca to be a viceroy; having at this time many sons who were grown fit to command; and in each of them established three supreme councils; the first of Justice, the second of War, and the third of Revenue, of which an Ynca was likewise president; and which continued ever after.

After having passed through a long reign, during which he was adored by all his subjects, this extraordinary genius fell into the last period of his life; upon the approach of which, he called together all his children and grand-children, with his eldest son, to whom he left his empire, and told them, that for his own part, he was going to repose himself with his father, the Sun, from whom he came; that he advised and charged them all to go on in the same paths of reason and virtue which
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he had taught them, till they followed him in the same journey; that, by this course only, they would prove themselves to be the true sons of the Sun, and as such be honoured and esteemed. But he gave a particular charge to the Ynca who was to be his successor; and commanded him to govern his people according to his example, and the precepts which he had received from the Sun; and that he should do it with justice, mercy, piety, clemency, and care of the poor and distressed: And when the time should come that he, the then prince, should be ready to go to rest with his father the Sun, that he should be exact in giving the same exhortations and instructions to his successor. This form was accordingly used in all the successions of the race of the Ynca's, which had lasted above eight hundred years when the Spaniards came among them, with the same orders, and with the greatest felicity that could be in any human government.

I have been the more particular in endeavouring to give my readers an idea of the civil government of this unlearned American; because I agree with the missionary Jesuits in thinking, that none of the learned sages of antiquity have formed so perfect a plan for human happiness, in this life; for I do not find that any mention was ever made by the Ynca's, of a future state, or even of a place of rest, after this life, for the common people:—The Ynca race were said to go to rest with their father the Sun, from whom they came; but the

happiness and felicity of their subjects were to finish with this life. It is true that, although the common people worshipped only the Sun, yet the Amautas, who were their priests and wise men, taught, that the Sun was only the great minister of Pachacamac; which the Spaniards interpreted to be the Being that animated and enlivened the world; and therefore they seem to have still a more refined notion of the Supreme Being, than even the Chinese philosophers, who adored the spirit and soul of the world. Mango Copac taught them that, when they offered sacrifices to his father the Sun, they should be formed of a certain part of the produce of the earth, that their great protector might continue to give a blessing upon their labours; and of the wild beasts which they caught in hunting:—but afterwards, when the precepts of this great lawgiver came to be explained by their Amautas, and when they were engaged in wars with the neighbouring powers, the people were ordered to offer human sacrifices, from among their enemies, to the Sun, to the end that he might give strength and victory to their arms.

Upon the whole, when we take a cursory survey of the principles of the religion, civil government, and policy, which were taught the Peruvians by the Ynca's, and at a time too when they were to be distinguished from the beasts only by their form, I think it will be allowed, that human nature is the same in all parts of the world; and
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that those unlearned Americans, from the strength of reason and wisdom, discovered that there was a Supreme Being, who created and governed all things, as perfectly as any of the philosophers of Greece, or the Brachmans of India.

The Americans, while they remained in a state of simplicity, and strict obedience to the Ynca's precepts, did not attempt to search after the mysteries of their great Pachacamac, and lived happily; but when the Amautas began, by a forced strain of reasoning, to explain those precepts, according to the dictates of their heated imaginations, and to introduce scenes of horror, and human sacrifices, among the people, although the form of the Ynca's government was still kept up, yet the populace, as well as their teachers, became corrupted, and the former, from bad example, fell into a state of refined barbarity, more horrible, and contrary to the pure dictates of human nature, than that out of which Mango Copac first drew them.—This will appear likewise to have been the case of all the ancient inhabitants of the northern parts of Europe, and of Asia, who were distinguished, by the Roman authors, by the names of Scythians, or Celts; who inhabited all that tract of country known at present by the name of Great Tartary, Lesser Tartary, Muscovy, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, and a great part of Germany; and who afterwards conquered, and gave laws to, all the other parts of Europe, and to a great part of Asia.

It will not be a very easy matter to form a just idea of the religion of the ancient Celts, which may be called the religion of our ancestors; and to trace it, from its original purity, through the different degrees of corruption into which it afterwards fell; because the Greek and Latin authors who have wrote upon this subject, are by no means exact; which may be owing to the little communication they had with those people, whom they called Barbarians, and to the difficulty which the Celts made, to lay open, to strangers, the particulars of their religion, or even to write them. Nevertheless when we collect what different authors, in different ages, have wrote upon this subject, and compare them with the poems and ancient chronicles of the people of the north, and with the monumental remains of those people which we find at present in the different parts of Europe, one will serve to correct the other, and to elucidate the whole matter; because it will appear very clear, that the Druids, and the priests of Odin, taught the same doctrines; and that great numbers of the Tartars continue in the same opinion to this day.

Very soon after Christianity was introduced into the northern parts of Europe, Sœmund Sigfússon, who was born in Iceland, in the year 1057, and who was sent to study at Cologne, in Germany, published the Edda; which contained the principal parts of the ancient Celtic mythology, wrote by some of the Pagan priests, after they were converted

verted to Christianity, and which were then extant. But in the year 1222, another celebrated Iceland author, Snorro Sturleson, who was then the supreme judge of the island, wrote a more correct manuscript of the Edda (a copy of which is preserved at Upsal to this day); and towards the end of the last century, Mr. Resenius, of Copenhagen, published a complete edition of the Edda, with some other pieces of ancient history.—It will from hence, as well as from some other books of ancient history, which will be hereafter stated, appear, that all the ancient Scythians, or Celts, originally followed the same religion; which was simple, and contained but a very few articles of belief; and there is great reason to believe, that it was the only religion of the first inhabitants of Europe. But the people in the southern parts soon altered it;—as this climate has always been productive of those restless geniuses, who, like the men of Athens, employed their time in little else than to hear or to tell some new thing. Born with lively imaginations and strong passions, they seldom suffered themselves to be governed by the dictates of reason, and coolly to reflect upon the particularities of an opinion, before they embraced it.—From hence we may account for all the extravagances and idolatry of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans; and I believe, it will be generally observed, that, among all the ancient nations of the world, those who were the most learned, were the

greatest idolaters. The northern and unlearned nations, on the contrary, who had not such a lively imagination, strength of passions, and presumption of their own abilities, were more steady in their first belief, and in the religion of their forefathers. However, a great part of the ancient Scythians, by mixing with the people of the southern climates, suffered their form of worship at last to be corrupted by a mixture of ridiculous and cruel ceremonies ; which, by little and little, they made an essential part of their religion ; and therefore we must distinguish between the religion of the original Celts, and that which they practised in their latter ages, before Christianity was introduced among them ; otherwise it will be very difficult to reconcile the accounts thereof, which we find in ancient historians.

When we examine this religion in its original state of purity, it will be found that it taught, that there was one Supreme God, who was the creator and master of the universe, and to whom all created beings were submissive and obedient. Such likewise was the Supreme God of the Germans, according to Tacitus *. The Edda calls him the author of every thing that exists, the eternal, the ancient, and living Being, the terrible God, the searcher of all hearts, the unchangeable God, whose power was infinite, and whose justice was incorruptible.—It was forbid to represent this Divinity under any corporal form, or even to sup-

* Tacit. German. c. 35.

pose that he was to be confined within walls : it was only in secret places, and consecrated forests, that he was to be worshipped worthily ; because he there appeared to reign in silence, and to inspire the worshippers with a greater respect *.—It was a great impiety to suppose him to be of any sex, to be like a human figure, to erect statues to him, or to represent him by images.—From this Supreme Divinity issued out an infinity of subaltern divinities, of which every part of the visible world was the seat and the temple, where they not only resided, but directed all the operations of mankind : every element had its own divinity, and even the forests, rivers, mountains, rocks, winds, and the thunder, had their respective divinities, and thereby were supposed to merit a religious adoration ; which, at first, was not directed to the visible and material part, but to the divinity which animated it. They worshipped the Supreme Divinity through fear of his being irritated against them for their sins ; although, in general, they looked up to him as to a merciful God, who would hear the prayers of those who repented, and as the creator and preserver of all things.—To serve this great Being by prayers and sacrifices, and not to do any wrong by word or deed to their neighbours, and to be bold and intrepid, were the fundamental principles of this religion ; which were much strengthened by a belief of a future state ; in which the just, religious, and valiant men,

* Tacit. German. c. 9.

were

were to enter into a state of happiness; while the wicked, and those who despised their religion, were to receive the most cruel punishments.

These were the principal points of the ancient religion of the Scythians, which continued, for many centuries, in its purity, in the northern parts of Europe, and of Asia; and even till towards the end of the Roman republic. These were likewise the principal points which were originally taught by the Druids; although, in Cæsar's time, they appear to have adopted many of both the cruel, and ridiculous ceremonies of the more idolatrous nations. Herodotus * tells us, that the ancient Getæ, a part of the Scythians, who inhabited that part of the country at present known by the name of the kingdom of Casan, adopted the same principles of religion; and therefore he calls them the immortal Getæ; because they were firm in the belief that, when they died, they should go to Zamolxis, who was their great lawgiver and high-priest, and enjoy a new life of happiness with him in another world; at least all such as lived according to his orders and instructions. And Cæsar † informs us, that the Britons and the Gauls, in his time, were firm in the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments.—When Tamerlane, who was at the head of a powerful army of the inhabitants of Great Tartary, had conquered Bajazet, he paid a visit to the Greek emperor at Constantinople, and entered into an alliance with him;

* Lib. 4. §. 95.

† Lib. 6. cap. 14.

and, although he was neither Christian, Jew, nor Mahometan, he declared that he and his people were the adorers of one God ; and he shewed such strict justice, exact discipline, generous bounty, and so much piety in his form of worship, that the Christians themselves were surpris'd at it : From the accounts which we receive from travellers, who have lately pass'd through this country, many of the inhabitants continue in the same opinion to this day.—This was likewise, as far as we can discover, the state of their religion in the northern parts of Europe, 'till Odin and his followers came into this country.

This Odin, whose true name was Frigg, the son of Fridulph, was one of the adherents of Mithridates, king of Pontus, whom Pompey forced to fly from their country : he commanded the Ases, a part of the ancient Scythians, who, according to Strabo and Pliny, inhabited a tract of country, to the north of mount Taurus, between the Black and the Caspian Seas ; and whose principal city was called Asgard. Frigg took the name of Odin, because he was the high priest of Odin, the Supreme God of the Getæ. And it was the custom of all the heroes among those people, to declare themselves to be descended from their gods, particularly the god of war.

Odin, having under his command the greatest part of the people called Ases, whom the Romans had driven out of their country, marched westward, and subdued almost all the northern parts of Europe ;

Europe ; the people, in every place he passed through, adoring him as a descendant of their Supreme God. Moreover, the arts which this man made use of to make himself be continually respected by the people, were very extraordinary, and shew us, that Mahomet was not by any means his equal in this respect. Among others, in all difficult affairs, he pretended to consult the head of a certain Mimer, who, during his lifetime, had the reputation of being a very wise man ; and when he died, Odin had his head embalmed, and persuaded the people that, by his enchantments, he made this head always reveal to him such secrets as he wanted to know ; and, for this purpose, he always carried it with him where-ever he went.—Moreover, the Iceland Chronicles paint this man as being the most eloquent and persuasive of all mankind ; and that, by his great knowledge in magic, he could do such mighty works, that even his very enemies regarded him as a god. This man was the inventor of the Runic characters, or letters, which were so long in use among these people.

Very soon after the arrival of Odin in the north, we find the ancient Celtic religion lose its primitive purity. This artful man, with all his magic and eloquence, found that he could not support himself in the absolute authority which he had assumed, without giving the people a terrible god, and founding a new form of worship, to serve as the basis for his new dominion.—The greatest alteration

alteration which he made in their ancient religion, was respecting the number of the gods which they were to adore. The ancient Scythians had such a veneration and respect for their Supreme God, that on all occasions they expressed their hatred and contempt of the polytheism of those very nations who treated them as barbarians; and their first care was to destroy all the objects of their idolatrous worship, in those places where they established their authority; which was the case when they entered into Greece, under the conduct of Xerxes.—Odin associated several of their subaltern divinities with their Supreme God, which he made those ignorant people believe were necessary to have recourse to in time of danger; as, from being more accessible than the Supreme God, whose name alone struck them with respect and terror, their succours would be more prompt and effectual. Each of these divinities was to preside over a particular part of the universe (as will be hereafter more fully explained); and after this æra, if they rendered greater honours to the Supreme Divinity than to the others, it was because they regarded him as the god of war; imagining, from its being their favourite passion, that no object was more worthy of his attention, nor over which he could more display his power and authority. And this is the reason that we often find him described in the Edda under the name of Odin, as the terrible and severe god, the father of bloodshed, the destroyer of mankind, the god

of victory, who gives courage to warriors in the time of battle, and who points out those who are to be killed. The warriors, when they went to battle, made a vow to send him a certain number of souls, which they supposed to be his due, and which they consecrated to him; and, with this condition, they implored his succour in all their wars.—This terrible god, whom Odin has designed as the god of bloodshed and horror, and whom he taught his people to adore in a manner that must fill every thinking person with the ideas of carnage and brutality, is represented in the beginning of the Edda, as the God who lived and governed before the creation of the world, who directs every thing above, and every thing below; who made the heavens and the earth, and every living thing; and who, before the creation of the heavens and the earth, lived among the giants.

It is certain, that the predominating passion of the ancient Celts was always that of war; but Odin greatly increased their natural ferocity, by making those bloody dogmas a part of their religion, and promising a state of happiness in another world, to those only who died heroes.—We are told, that all the Celts, and the Celtiberians, leaped for joy when they marched on to battle, from the agreeable hope which they had of going out of this world in a manner so happy and so agreeable; and, on the contrary, they were full of lamentations when they saw themselves attacked
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by any dangerous sickness, and threatened with such a shameful and miserable end*.

The principal divinity of the ancient Celts, after Odin, was Frigga his wife. It was the opinion of all the Scythians, of the ancient Syrians, and of the first inhabitants of Greece, that the Supreme Being, or the God of heaven, united himself with the earth, to produce the subaltern divinities, man, and all other living creatures; and for this reason they called Frigga the mother of the gods. We learn from Tacitus, that, in his time, the Germans (particularly the inhabitants of the north of Germany) adored the Deesse Herthus, or the earth.—Frigga afterwards became the goddess of love, the Venus of the north; and it was to her to whom they addressed themselves to obtain marriages, and a happy delivery in childbed. The Edda calls her the most favourable of all the goddesses, because she gave them dispensations for their pleasures and voluptuousness, of every kind.

The third principal divinity which we find in the Edda, was Thor. The Druids likewise had a great veneration for this god, who they said presided over the thunder; and Julius Cæsar † takes particular notice of a god of the ancient Gauls, who was charged with the conduct of the atmosphere. The Edda expressly calls Thor the most valiant of all the sons of Odin, and that he was always sent by the gods to destroy the giants their enemies.

* Valer. Maxim. c. 6. † Cæsar, Lib. 6. c. 17.

The three divinities, whom I have just now mentioned, formed the supreme council of the gods, and were the principal objects of the worship and veneration of all the inhabitants of the north, after Frigge or Odin came among them. The number and employment of their divinities, of the second order, is not easy to determine. The Edda mentions twelve gods, and twelve goddesses, to whom the people of the north were obliged to render divine honours; but although these gods and goddesses had a certain power, they were obliged to obey Odin, the most ancient of the gods, and the great principle of all things; such was Niord, the Neptune of the people of the north; and the Edda exhorts these people to adore him very devoutly, fearing that he might otherwise do a great deal of mischief.—Balder was another son of Odin, who was wise, eloquent, and endued with great majesty: this was the Apollo of the Greeks. Tyr was the god of war, and the protector of the courageous and brave: the Mars of the Greeks. Brage was the god of eloquence and of poetry; and his wife, who was called Iduna, had the care of certain apples, of which the gods eat, when they felt themselves growing old, as they were endued with the power of making them young again. I shall omit the names of the other gods, which make up the number of twelve, they not being material to my purpose, and say a few words only of Loke, whom the people of the north certainly regarded

regarded as the bad principle, although they placed him among the gods.

Loke, says the Edda, was the calumniator of the gods, and the object of detestation of the gods and of men. He is wicked and inconstant; and no person regards him as an object of veneration: he is perfidious and deceitful: he has had several children by his wife Signi; and he is likewise the father of three monsters; of the wolf Fenris, of the serpent Midgard, and of Hela, or Death. All these three are the enemies of the gods; who, after various efforts, have bound the wolf till the last day, when he shall be set at liberty, and devour the Sun: the serpent will be cast into the sea, until he shall be vanquished by the god Thor: and Hela, or Death, will be sent into the regions of darkness; where she has the government of nine worlds, which she divides among those who are sent to her. The Edda gives us several anecdotes of Loke, of his wars against the gods, and particularly against Thor; of his bad and deceitful conduct; and of the punishment which the gods inflicted upon him when he was taken; how they shut him up in a great cave, formed of three sharp and pointed rocks, where his rage makes him tremble with such violence as to cause earthquakes; and where, according to this mythology, he will rest a captive till the end of the world; but then he will be killed by Heimdall the porter of the gods.

As the goddesses, according to the Edda, had only the care of inferior and domestic affairs, I

E

shall

shall pass them over, and proceed to state the account which this system of mythology gives of the creation of the world.

“ In the beginning of time there was neither
 “ sea, nor river, nor refreshing breezes ; there was
 “ neither earth below, nor heaven above ; the whole
 “ was a vast chaos, without herbs, and without
 “ seeds. The sun had no fixed abode ; the stars
 “ knew not their dwelling places, and the moon was
 “ ignorant of her power. Although there was then
 “ a shining and a flaming world towards the south,
 “ from whence torrents of fire ran continually in-
 “ to the great chaos which was towards the north ;
 “ but, by being carried too far from their source,
 “ congealed in falling into the chaos, and filled it
 “ with cinders and ice. Thus the great abyfs was
 “ filled, little and little ; but there remained in
 “ the middle of it a light and fixed air, from which
 “ frozen vapours exhaled without ceasing, ’till a
 “ warm breeze from the south came and melted
 “ these vapours into living drops, out of which
 “ was formed the giant Ymer ; and while this giant
 “ slept, there were formed a male and a female,
 “ from whom are descended the race of the giants ;
 “ a race wicked and corrupted, as well as Ymer
 “ their author. There were likewise formed out of
 “ those living drops, another good race, who allied
 “ themselves with those of the giant Ymer.—The
 “ latter was called the family of Bor, from the
 “ name of the first of this family, who was the father
 “ of Odin.—The sons of Bor killed the giant
 “ Ymer,

“ Ymer, and the blood ran from his wounds in
 “ such abundance, that it caused a general inun-
 “ dation, wherein all the giants perished but one,
 “ who saved himself and his family upon a bark.
 “ Then there was a new world formed : the sons
 “ of Bor, or the gods, threw the body of the giant
 “ into the chaos, and therewith formed the earth
 “ as it now is ; of his blood they formed the sea
 “ and the rivers, of his flesh they formed the
 “ earth, of his bones they formed the moun-
 “ tains, and of his teeth, and the fragments of his
 “ broken bones, they formed the rocks : from
 “ his skull they formed the vault of heaven, which
 “ is supported by four dwarfs, called the South,
 “ North, East, and West : they placed flambeaux
 “ therein to give it light ; and to other fires,
 “ which were then likewise formed, they fixed the
 “ spaces that they were to run ; some in the
 “ heavens, and others under the heavens : the
 “ days were now distinguished, and the years had
 “ their number.—They made the earth round, and
 “ bordered it by the great ocean ; upon the borders
 “ of which they placed an inferior race of giants.
 “ —One day when the sons of Bor, or the gods,
 “ were walking thereon, they found two pieces
 “ of wood floating upon the waters, which they
 “ took and therewith formed a man and a woman.
 “ The eldest of the sons gave them the soul and
 “ the life, the second the motion and the know-
 “ ledge, and the third made them the present of
 “ speech, of hearing, and of sight, to which he

“ likewise added beauty and cloathing. It is from
 “ this man, and from this woman, who were call-
 “ ed Askus and Embla, that the race of mankind
 “ are descended, who were permitted to inhabit
 “ the earth.”

Notwithstanding this part of the Edda is full of fiction, it clearly discovers the remains of a very ancient and general tradition, divers parts of which have been altered, ornamented, or suppressed, by particular nations, as they thought proper. The account that Moses has given us of the creation, appears to be the most perfect and consistent of any ; and yet we find in it several articles which coincide with some parts of the Edda ; particularly respecting matters, which have never yet been explained ; namely, of there having been giants on the earth, in those days *, and of the race which were formed between the sons of God and the daughters of men. The Edda calls all those who lived before the deluge giants, and says, that they all perished but one, who saved himself and his family upon a bark ; but Moses has given us a long and distinct account of the race of Adam, and says, that besides these, there were giants upon the earth. I am much inclined to believe that Moses, in many particulars, gave too much into the fictitious, or rather allegorical manner of writing of those days, which has made many parts of his books appear obscure ; although the truth of what he has said will not at all be impeached thereby,

* Gen. chap. vi. ver. 4.

as we find an account of the creation, very much to the same purpose, in the beginning of the theogonie of Hesiod, and in the mythologic monuments of other Asiatic nations.—Upon the whole, it appears that this was a part of the belief of the ancient Scythians, which they brought with them into Europe.

The Edda is likewise very expressive of the state wherein the good and the bad will find themselves after death, and of the end of the world.

“ In the latter days a barbarous age will come,
 “ an age of the sword, when iniquity will abound
 “ upon the earth ; when brothers will shed each
 “ other’s blood ; when sons will assassinate their own
 “ fathers, and fathers their sons ; when adultery,
 “ and even incest, will be common ; and when a
 “ man will not spare his most faithful friend.
 “ Then a very severe winter will come, when the
 “ snow will fall from the four quarters of the
 “ world, the winds will blow with fury, and the
 “ frost will harden the earth. Three such winters
 “ will follow each other, without any summer
 “ to temper them. After which great signs and
 “ wonders will happen ; monsters will break their
 “ chains and escape ; the great dragon will fall
 “ into the ocean, and, by his motions, the earth
 “ will be shaken and covered with water. The
 “ wolf Fenris, having broke his chain, will open
 “ his enormous throat, which reaches from the
 “ earth to heaven ; and the fire will fly out of his
 “ eyes, and out of his nostrils ; he will eat up

“ the sun ; and the great dragon, which will fol-
 “ low him, will vomit up torrents of poison upon
 “ the waters, and in the air. In this confusion,
 “ the stars will start from their spheres, the vault
 “ of heaven will be divided, and the army of the
 “ bad angels, and of the giants, conducted by
 “ their princes, will arrange themselves to attack
 “ the gods. But Heimdal, the crier of the gods,
 “ will immediately arise and sound his loud trum-
 “ pet, whereby the gods will be assembled, and
 “ heaven and earth will be full of fear and trem-
 “ bling. The gods will arm themselves, and all
 “ the heroes will be arranged in order of battle.
 “ Odin will then appear, with his helmet of gold,
 “ and his bright armour, and his large scimitar
 “ in his hand, and will attack the wolf Fenris,
 “ but will be immediately devoured by him, al-
 “ though Fenris will perish at the same instant.
 “ Thor will be suffocated by the steams of the
 “ poison that will exhale from the great dragon in
 “ dying.—Every thing will now be burnt up, and
 “ the flames will mount up to heaven. But soon
 “ after, a new earth will appear, ornamented with
 “ green fields, and all kinds of fruit, in which no
 “ kind of calamity will be known ; and a palace
 “ will be raised therein, more shining than the
 “ sun, and covered with gold : this will be the
 “ habitation of the just, where they will rejoice
 “ through endless ages. The All-powerful, who
 “ sits above to govern all, and to administer di-
 “ vine justice, will now pronounce his decree, and
 “ establish

“ establish the sacred destiny which will endure
 “ for ever. There will be likewise another place
 “ established, far off from the sun, with its doors
 “ towards the north, where there will be a con-
 “ tinual rain of poison. This place is chiefly
 “ composed of the bodies of dead serpents, and
 “ therein will be thrown those who have perjured
 “ themselves, assassins, and those who have se-
 “ duced married women. A black and winged
 “ dragon will be continually flying about this
 “ place, to devour the bodies of the unhappy
 “ which shall be shut up therein.”

Notwithstanding all the allegory and obscurity
 which we find in these descriptions, it will be ob-
 served, that the belief of the immortality of the
 soul, and of there being separate places for the
 just and for the unjust, after this life, according as
 they conducted themselves in this world, was a
 principal part of the ancient Celtic religion. All
 the Celts were of the same opinion; and it was
 upon this belief that they founded the obligation
 that every person was under to serve the gods, and
 to be brave in battle.

The Edda likewise particularly distinguishes the
 different places where the just and the unjust shall
 repose themselves, from the hour of death, 'till the
 end of the world.

“ The heroes,” says the Edda, “ and those who
 “ are received into Odin’s palace, have every day
 “ the pleasure of arming themselves, of passing in
 “ review, and of arranging themselves in order of
 E 4 “ battle;

“ battle ; and although they cut each other in
 “ pieces, yet when the hour of eating approaches,
 “ they return a horse-back safe and sound into
 “ Odin’s hall, and set themselves down to eat and
 “ to drink. And although they are of an infinite
 “ number, the flesh of a wild boar suffices them
 “ all ; which, notwithstanding it is served up
 “ every day, still continues whole. Their drink
 “ is beer and hydromel. One goat, whose milk
 “ is hydromel, furnishes sufficient to make all the
 “ company drunk. Their glasses are the skulls of
 “ their enemies, whom they have killed. , Odin
 “ alone sits at a particular table, and has no other
 “ nourishment but wine to drink. A great num-
 “ ber of virgins serve the table of those heroes,
 “ and fill their glasses when they are empty.”

This was the place which, as Odin told them,
 was reserved for the heroes and for the just ; and
 therefore it was no wonder that those people were
 brave, and met the most cruel death with the
 greatest intrepidity. And, on the contrary, they
 were told, that those who were wicked, and those
 who died a natural death, were kept in great mi-
 sery, were continually hungry, and had nothing
 to eat, and that they wished to have every thing,
 but could have nothing which they wished for or
 desired.

After having taken notice of the principal dog-
 mas of the ancient Celtic religion, it will be ne-
 cessary, the more to illustrate this subject, to set
 forth the conformity which we find between the
 forms

forms of worship which they rendered to the Divinity, in the different parts of Europe.

It has been already observed, that in the first ages of the Celtic religion, they held it as a fundamental principle of this religion, that it would be a great offence to the Supreme God, to pretend to shut him up between walls, and thereby to prevent the free exercise of his power, which should extend over all his creatures; and therefore the very ancient Celts always adored their gods in open places, or near a grove of sacred oaks. Many monuments which were used for this purpose, exist even to this day, notwithstanding all the zeal that the primitive Christians used to destroy them. In the province of Scania, in Sweden, in Denmark, in various places in Cornwall and Devonshire, but chiefly upon the tops of hills, in various places in Wales, in Westmoreland, in Frizeland, and in Iceland, we find monuments of this kind, with the altars still existing. The greatest part of these altars are formed of three long rude rocks, raised upon one end, round a large flat rock, under which was a cavity to receive the blood of the victims; and the whole was surrounded with a circle of rude rocks, raised upon one end. But, in after-ages, when the Celts adopted many of the ceremonies of the southern nations, we find their altars constructed with more magnificence. The altar was surrounded with two circles of enormous large rocks, many of which were cut and formed for that purpose; and in some places we find two

or

or three altars of this construction, very near each other. Of this kind are the places of their religious worship which we find in Zeland, in Denmark, in the Isle of Anglesey, at Abury in North Wiltshire, and the famous Stonehenge.

About the time of the coming of Odin into the north, when the Druids and the other Celtic priests had a free communication with the Greeks and Romans, it is certain that all the descendants of the ancient Celts fell into a state of the most barbarous idolatry. They now erected temples, and offered human sacrifices to their idols. A very famous temple of this kind was erected at Upsal, in Sweden; another at Drontheim, in Norway; and a third in the island of Iceland*.—The great temple of Upsal was particularly consecrated to the three principal divinities which I have before described. Odin was represented holding a sword in his hand; Thor was to the left hand of Odin, with a crown upon his head, a scepter in one hand, and a club in the other. Frigga was to the left of Thor; and she was represented with all the properties of the two sexes, and with several other attributes, which made her be regarded as the goddess of voluptuousness. Odin was invoked as the god of war and of victory; Thor as the god who directed the atmosphere; and Frigga as the goddess of pleasures, of love, and of marriage.

During the time of the ancient Celts, their

* Angrim. Jon. Crymogæa.

offerings were simple, and their ceremonies so few, that the shepherds could perform them. In those times, they offered only the first-fruits of the earth; afterwards, the fattest of the animals *; and then they appointed priests to perform the ceremonies with more solemnity. But when those priests, perhaps after the example of Moses, or of the inhabitants of the more southern nations, had once laid it down for a principle, that the shedding the blood of those animals appeased the wrath of the gods, and that their justice turned upon those victims the terrible vengeance that they designed for the guilty, they bent their whole attention upon gaining the favour of the gods by this easy method. Afterwards, when their desires became more violent, when they had any particular favour to demand of the gods, or when they would endeavour to prevent any public calamity, the blood of the animals appeared to be too vile, and not sufficient to draw the attention of the gods; then they offered up human sacrifices upon their altars. The ceremonies now became very solemn, and the priests, who performed them, to have great authority among the people. In time of war, they chose a certain number of persons for this purpose, from among their prisoners; and, in the time of peace, from among their slaves. Those unhappy people were chosen by lot from among the whole number; but they were treated with such honours, and received such caresses from all those who were present,

* Tacit. German. c. 15.

that

that they often thought themselves happy in being appropriated to this purpose. However, towards the end of the reign of those bloody priests, who in Britain, Gaul, and Germany, were called Druids; and among the more northern people, Drottes; * they carried these bloody scenes to such a height, that they became horrible even to the idolatrous nations of the south.—But notwithstanding the Druids and the Drottes kept the principal part of the people in this cruel superstition, to the end that they might maintain their authority over them, great numbers of the inhabitants of the north were too wise not to see the folly, as well as the barbarity, of the tenets of that bold impostor Frigge or Odin, and to depart from the pure religion of their forefathers.—We are told, † that Olaus, king of Norway, asked one of his officers, of what religion he was? and was answered, “I do not believe in idols, nor in spirits; but I believe in the Father of the sun and of nature:” and that another officer of this kingdom, called Thorstein, in speaking of his father, said, “He will receive of Him, who made the heavens and the universe, a recompence for his good deeds.” And, on another occasion, this same officer made a vow to Him who made the sun; “for, (said he) his works shew that his power is above all other powers.”

* Arngr. Jon. Crymog. L. 1. c. 7. Ubbo. Emmius Histor. Fris. Lib 1. p. 21.

† Bartholin. de causis, &c. p. 80. et Lib. 1. c. 6.

The same author tells us, that this was the religion of vast numbers of the most sensible people of that country. Another learned author * tells us, that Torchill, the supreme judge of Iceland, a man of great integrity, and who was distinguished among the most wise magistrates of this island, when it was governed in the form of a republic, seeing himself drawing near to his end, gave orders that he would be placed in the open air, with his face turned towards the sun : and, after having rested some minutes in this posture, and in a kind of ecstasy, he died, recommending his soul to the God who had created the sun and the stars.

Upon the whole, although the Edda should have no other merit, but of being the only book existing, which informs us what were the opinions of such vast numbers of people, as were the ancient Celtic nations, upon those important points before mentioned ; particularly that of the immortality of the soul ; and that for so many hundreds of years, it is certainly worthy of our attention. In fact, it throws some new light upon the history of those people, who were afterwards the conquerors of the greatest part of Europe. We shall hereby read with surprize, that a people whom the philosophers of Greece and Rome have represented as barbarians, should occupy themselves in such sublime contemplations, and by the lights of unassisted nature only, prove themselves

* Ara. Jon. Crymog. L. 1. c. 6.

to be more worthy of the name of rational creatures, than those famous nations, who would arrogate to themselves the exclusive privilege of knowledge and reason, and yet continued to debase human nature, by worshipping idols made from wood and stone.

From what has been before recited, from the Edda, it will appear that, according to the opinion of the Celts, nature is in a continued scene of labour, and exercise, and that, consequently, her vigour will be by little and little exhausted, and her decline will every day appear more sensible. At last the seasons will be changed, and a long and extraordinary winter will be the last marks of her decline. The moral world will not be less troubled than the physical one: nature, in her last agonies, will plead no longer with mankind, but will leave their hearts a prey to their cruel and inhuman passions: then all the powerful enemies, whom the Gods with much difficulty kept in chains, will break their chains, and immediately plunge the whole universe into confusion. In vain shall the Gods, supported by the whole army of heroes, endeavour to stop the progress of those powerful monsters;—they will destroy them, it is true, but they will fall with them, although fighting in the bosom of that Great Divinity, who created all things, and who will survive to all eternity. After this the whole universe will be destroyed, or rather purified, by fire, as another will immediately appear more agreeable, and more fruitful.

This,

This, in a few words, is the doctrine of the Edda, divested of all its allegory and ornaments ; and I need not inform my readers, that it is very like the description of the last judgment, and of the end of the world, which we find in the New Testament.—We see here, as it were in a mist, what Jesus Christ and St. John have since more clearly explained to us.—Moreover, when we read the opinions of many of the great ancient philosophers, who were modest, and suffered themselves to be guided by the lights which nature held out to them, we find therein the pure ancient Celtic religion entire, although it was established long before those philosophers had existence ; namely, the belief of one great and eternal Divinity, who was the soul, and creator of all things ; and that, from this Divinity, there issued out an inferior order of beings, when the world was created, who were appointed to govern it under his orders, and with it were to undergo the same revolutions, in the day which was fixed for renewing it : that the fire hid in the bowels of the earth will first consume all its humidity, and afterwards destroy it entirely.—The time will come, says Seneca *, when the world, ready to be renewed, will be burnt up ; when the opposite powers shall destroy each other, by striving to gain a superiority ; when the stars shall run counter to each other, and the whole universe, in this confusion, shall be burnt with fire. Zeno is of the same opinion ; but he adds likewise, agreeable to

* Seneca Consol. ad Marciam. c. ult.

the opinion of the Celts, that an inundation will precede this conflagration.—The following verses of Lucan will tend to shew us his opinion of this matter :

*Hos populos si nunc non uferit ignis,
Uret cum terris, uret cum gurgite ponti,
Communis mundo supereſt roguſ.*

Seneca tells us, in another place, that the gods will be destroyed by the hands of each other, before this system of nature shall be dissolved. The world being dissolved, says this same author, and re-entered into the bosom of Jupiter, this God will concenter and hide himself within himself for some time, attentive only to his own thoughts ; afterwards a new world will issue out from him, perfect in all its parts ; the animals will be newly formed, and the men will be produced under the best auspices to people this earth, worthy to be the seat of virtue*.

This doctrine was very much to the same purpose with that of the Magi. Zoroaster had taught them, that the battle of Oromasde and Arimane, i. e. of the light, and of the darkness, of the good and of the bad principle, would continue till the last day ; that then the good principle would be re-united to the Supreme God, from whence it proceeded ; and that the bad would be vanquished and destroyed : and that, afterwards, the world would be purified by fire, and become a bright and happy habitation, where sin and wickedness would no more find any place †.

The arts, sciences, and philosophy, heretofore

* Seneca Epist. 9. et Quæst. Nat. l. 3. c. ult.

† Brucker Hist. Crit. Philos. t. 1. l. 2. c. 3.

made their progression from the east to the west ; and, many ages before Odin came from Asia into the north of Europe, the belief of this doctrine was among the ancient Celtic nations. The Druids had introduced it into Germany, Gaul, and Britain ; the Greeks and the Romans had some idea of it, but the greatest part of them did not embrace the whole of this system, but contented themselves with detaching such parts of it as regarded the destruction of this universe, and as favoured their confused and idolatrous opinions.

Upon the whole, when we cast our eyes over all the nations of the world, and examine all their histories, in different ages, among this prodigious diversity of manners and of characters, we find every where almost the same ideas of a Supreme Being ; and that he would reward those who did good, and punish those who did evil. Moreover we find among the inhabitants of all parts of the world a certain innate principle of justice, whereby we may, notwithstanding our own maxims, judge whether our own actions, as well as those of others, are either good or evil ; and this appears to be the highest point to which our faculties, and the light of our reason, unassisted by divine revelation, are capable of attaining. All the nations of the world, whose history is on record, agree in this particular ; and, from the earliest ages, the greatest part of the people, finding, from the violence of their passions, they were led to do evil, and thereby to offend the Great Author of nature daily, sup-

posed that, by making some terrible sacrifices, they should be able to turn off his vengeance; without reflecting that such sacrifices very often augmented their crimes, and plunged them into the most infamous and detestable scenes of horror. Others again have supposed that, through the intercession of some inferior divinities, which were held forth to them, by the vivacity of their imagination only, they should be able to appease the wrath of the Great and offended God.—Hence the idolatry of the southern nations of Europe and Asia. And we find some of their principal philosophers, notwithstanding all their learning, deaf to the voice of nature, and serving the most despicable of their divinities. But, in all ages, and in all parts of the world, we find that some artful and designing men, pretending to be sent, or inspired, by the Supreme Being, to declare his will among mankind, have gained an absolute dominion and authority over their fellow-creatures; from the veneration which the latter had for the Great Father of all things, from being convinced of the utility of such a divine message, and from the necessity which they felt themselves under to know his will, and thereby to adore him more perfectly than they were capable of doing it from the light of nature only.—I shall hereafter compare the doctrines and examples of some of the principal of those prophets and teachers, with those of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, and point out the villany and design of the former; but at present, agree-
able

able to my original plan, shall proceed to take a brief survey of the religion which has predominated in a considerable part of the world for more than one thousand years past, and which has been adopted by several empires in Asia and Africa.

IN the sixth century after Jesus Christ, a most extraordinary man, called Mahomet, appeared upon the theatre of the world, in Arabia Felix, where he was born and bred. He was a man of mean parentage and condition, and very illiterate, but was witty, and had great natural talents. He was a servant to a rich merchant of this country; and, after his master's death, having married his widow, he became possessed of much wealth, and of a numerous family. Among others, he entertained in it a monk, at least one who went by that name, whose libertine dispositions had made him leave his convent and profession; but otherwise he was a man of great learning. Mahomet, from his childhood, was subject to fits of the epilepsy; and, either from the heat of the climate, or from the necessity which that disease laid him under, was very temperate, and abstained from wine; but, in other things, he was voluptuous, and dissolute to a great degree. He was ashamed of his disease, and, to disguise it from his wife and family, he pretended that his fits were so many trances, into which he was cast by the God of Heaven; wherein he was instructed in his will, and in his true worship and laws, together

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with

with the particular form in which he would be served; and that he was commanded to publish them to the world, to teach them, and to see them obeyed.

At this time, all the christian provinces of the east were over-run with Arianism; which, notwithstanding all the sophistry of its learned advocates and professors, denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, and allowed only his prophetic office. The principal parts of Arabia and of Egypt were filled with great numbers of the scattered Jews, who, upon the destruction of their country in Adrian's time, had fled into those parts, to avoid the total ruin, and even extinction, which was threatened their nation by that emperor. The rest of Arabia and Egypt was inhabited by an idolatrous race, who had very little regard for their decayed and derided idolatry, and therefore had turned their whole attention to luxury and pleasure, and to the desire and acquisition of riches, in order to obtain these ends. The disposition of the inhabitants of this part of the world being such, Mahomet, to humour and comply with the passions of these three sorts of men, and with the assistance of the Monk, his only confidant, formed a scheme of religion, which he thought would be the most likely to take them all in; or at least not to shock their common opinions and dispositions; and, at the same time, perfectly agreeable to his own disposition and designs.—He professed to believe in one God, the creator and
governor

governor of heaven and earth, and of all things which are therein; and who is equally omniscient and omnipresent. He declared that, in ancient times, God had sent Moses, his first and great prophet, to explain his laws to mankind; but that they were not received by the Gentiles, nor even obeyed by the Jews themselves, to whom he was more peculiarly sent; and that this was the cause of all the evils and captivities that so frequently befel them. He declared that, in later ages, God had sent Jesus Christ, who was the second prophet, and greater than Moses, to preach his laws, and the observation of them, in greater purity; and to do it with gentleness, humility, and patience; but he had found no better reception, or success, among men than Moses had done. He declared that, for this reason, God had now sent him, his last and greatest prophet, to publish his laws, and orders, with power, and to subdue those, by force and violence, who would not willingly receive them; and, for this purpose, to establish a kingdom upon earth, that should propagate the divine laws and orders throughout the whole world. He declared that God had doomed all those to utter ruin and destruction, who should refuse them; and, on the contrary, he had given to those who professed, and obeyed them, the spoils and possessions of his and their enemies, as a reward in this life; and had moreover provided a paradise hereafter, with an excess of luxury and sensual enjoyments, particularly of beautiful women, who

were to be newly created for that purpose ; but, to those who should die in the pursuit and propagation of the divine laws, through the rest of the world, which, he said, would in time submit, or be subdued under them, he promised more transcendent degrees of pleasure and felicity.

The more to favour the opinions of his Jewish converts, he declared, that the circumcision was a kind of covenant between God and man, and therefore he ordered it to be continued ; but that children were not to be circumcised before they were seven or eight years old, and were able to pronounce the following words ; *La ilha illa allha mehemed rasoul allha* ; namely, that there is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet.—He declared that each of his followers was permitted to marry four wives at a time ; and moreover to have as many other women as he could support.—These, with the severe prohibition of drinking wine, and the principle of predestination, were the first and principal doctrines and institutions of Mahomet ; and they were received with much applause by great numbers of Arians, Jews, and Gentiles, in this part of the world : some adhering to him, from the belief of his divine mission and authority ; but a much greater number from his professing many of their own principles, and religious opinions ; and still more, by his complying with their luxury, voluptuousness, avarice, and ambition.—After his fits, or trances, he wrote the different chapters of his Alcoran, as newly inspired
and

and dictated from heaven; and left them in such a state, that the whole appears to us like a wild rhapsody of fantastical imaginations and inventions, without any meaning or order; although this has always passed, among his followers, as a divine and sacred book.

This new religion, being so agreeable to the principles and passions of great multitudes of people in those countries, made such a rapid progress, that it very soon spread from Arabia into Egypt and Syria; and the power of this impostor increased with such a sudden growth, as well as his doctrines, that he lived to see them overspread both those countries, and a great part of Persia. The decline of the Greek empire at Constantinople, which had for some time before been much shaken by the invasions of the northern nations, and thereby disabled from making any opposition to this new and formidable enemy, together with the divisions among the Christians, made way for the Mahometan conquests, and increased the number of proselytes in this new religion. The Arians, persecuted in the eastern provinces by some of the Greek emperors, who were of the same faith with the western or Roman church, made easy turns to the doctrines of Mahomet, which professed Jesus Christ to have been a great and a divine prophet, and which was all in a manner that they themselves believed. The cruel persecutions of the other Grecian princes against those Christians who would not admit the use of images, made great numbers

of them go over to the Mahometans, who abhorred that worship as much as themselves. The Jews were allured to profess Mahometanism, by the profession of unity in the Godhead, which they pretended not to find in the Christian faith; and by the great honour which the followers of Mahomet paid to Moses, as a prophet and a law-giver, sent immediately from God into the world. The Gentiles had not only a gratification of their luxury and sensual pleasures, but they met with an opinion of the Gentilism in that of predestination, which was a principle of the Stoics, and that into which unhappy men commonly fell, and sought for refuge, in the uncertain conditions and events of life, under cruel and tyrannical governments.

Mahomet left two branches of his race for succession, both of which were esteemed divine by his followers; the one was continued in the Caliphs of Persia, and the other in those of Egypt and Arabia: but both these, under the common name of Saracens, made a rapid progress, the one to the east, and the other to the west.—The great extent and power of the Persian branch continued long among the Saracens, but was at length overrun, first by the Turks, and then by the Tartars under Tamerlane, whose race continued there till the time of Ishmael, from whom the present Sophies are derived; although they still continued in the belief of the doctrines of Mahomet. This Ishmael was a fanatic, and pretended to correct and reform the Mahometan doctrines, which he
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said had been changed and abused by the Turks. He professed to reform their manners, as well as their principles; and taught, that Haly alone, of all Mahomet's followers, ought to be owned and believed as his true Successor; which has made the Persians ever since regard the Turks as heretics, as the Turks do them. This artful enthusiast gained so many followers, by his new and refined principles, and air of devotion, that he made himself king of Persia, with the absolute sovereign power and authority over his countrymen; the great point which he originally had in view, and which animated Mahomet, Odin, and others, to pursue the same measures before him.—

The Arabian branch of the Mahometan empire, after it had extended itself throughout all Egypt and Arabia, under the conduct of Almanzor, the greatest prince of this race, who was equally great in virtue, piety, learning, and native goodness, as in valour, power, and empire, extended itself throughout all the northern parts of Africa, as far as the western ocean, over all the principal provinces of Spain, and through a great part of the eastern kingdoms of Africa.—This empire continued, under the great Caliphs of Egypt, for several ages; but at length these degenerating from the example and virtues of Almanzor, and, under the pretence of religion, using all manner of cruelties and oppression, came to be hated by their subjects; and, to secure themselves from their resentment, were obliged to procure a powerful guard

guard of Circassian slaves : but the captain of this guard, finding his own power, and the general disesteem into which one of the Caliphs was fallen by his infamous course of life, deposed him, and took the government of the empire upon himself, under the name of Sultan ; and reigned by the sole force and support of his Circassian troops. This government lasted between two and three hundred years, during which time, although they pretended to embrace the Mahometan religion, they acted in direct contradiction thereto : for the sovereign power was not hereditary, but upon the death or deposing of a Sultan, a new one was always elected by this body of troops, out of their own bands ; and by the constitution of their government, no son of a Sultan was ever either to succeed his father, or to be elected Sultan. These Circassian troops, commonly called the Mamaluc bands, made a great figure, and a powerful resistance against the growing empire of the Turks ; till, after a long war, they were conquered by Selim.

It has not been clearly determined, whether the Turks were first called into the southern parts of Asia by the Greek or by the Persian emperors : but it is by all agreed, that when their numbers increased, they revolted from the assistance of their friends, formed a government for themselves, and embraced the Mahometan religion ; the principles of which they improved by several new orders and regulations, calculated entirely for conquest, and extent of empire ; and hereby they formed

a kingdom, which, under the Ottoman race, subdued both the Greek empire, and that of the Arabians, and established itself in all their extensive dominions, wherein it continues to this day; but with the addition of some other provinces to their empire, and many more to the Mahometan religion, as by them improved; so that the Turkish empire greatly assisted to the propagation of this religion; even more so than the Persian or the Arabian empires.

The fundamental principles upon which this government was founded, and raised to such a height, were those of Mahomet, which have been already described; and which, by their sensual paradise, and predestination, and the spoils of the conquered, both in their lands, goods, and liberties, which were all seized at the pleasure of the conqueror, were great incentives of courage and of enterprize. These were joined, in the second place, to a belief of the divine designation of the Ottoman line, to reign among them, for the propagation of their faith, and for the extension of their territories; so that they regard their reigning prince, at least by adoption, as the successor of Mahomet, and not only as a sovereign law-giver in civil, but, with the assistance of his Mufti, as supreme judge in all religious matters. And this principle was so far improved among these people, that in all things they believed obedience should be given to the will of their prince, as to the will of God, of whom they thought him the legal representative;

presentative ; and that they were not only bound to obey his commands, with the hazard of their lives, against his enemies, but even, whenever he commanded them, to lay down their lives, with the same resignation that is by others thought due to the decrees of the Supreme Being.—In the third place, all the lands in the conquered countries were divided into timariots, or soldiers shares, except those that were reserved and appropriated to the emperor's immediate use. And these shares being only at pleasure, or for life, leave him absolute proprietor of all the lands in his dominions ; which, by the common idea of power being annexed to land, must in consequence make him the most absolute sovereign in the world ; especially as, in the fourth place, there are no honours or charges, any more than lands, allowed to be hereditary, but all to depend upon the will of the prince : This obliges every man, who has ambition or avarice to gratify, to court his present humour, serve his present designs, and obey his commands, of what nature soever they are.—Fifthly, the suppression, and in a manner extinction, of all kinds of learning among the subjects of their whole empire ; at least among the natural-born Turks and janizaries, in whom the strength of it consists ; except the study of the Alcoran. This ignorance paves the way for the most blind obedience ; which is often shaken by disputes concerning religious principles, as well as of those of government, dominion, and of other matters.—Sixthly, the institution

tion of the famous order of the janizaries; which consisted in the arbitrary choice of such Christian children throughout their dominions, as from their natural vigor of constitution, strength, and boldness, were supposed to be most fit for the emperor's peculiar service. These were taken into the emperor's care, and trained up by officers appointed for that purpose, who endeavoured to improve all the advantages of nature, by those of education and discipline. They were all diligently instructed in the Mahometan religion, and in the veneration of the princes of the Ottoman race; and, at a certain age, were entered into the body of janizaries, who were the emperor's guards. By this means the power of the Christians was continually lessened throughout the empire, and weakened by the loss of the strongest and bravest of their men; while that of the Turks was increased in the same proportion; and a chosen body of troops kept up continually, who esteemed themselves not only as subjects of the empire, but as the domestic servants of the Grand Signor's person and family.—Seventhly, the great temperance introduced among all orders of men in the empire, by the severe defence of, and abstinence from, wine; and by the provision of one only kind of food for their armies, which was rice.—Lastly, the promptness, as well as severity, of their justice, both civil and military; which, although it is often subject to mistakes, and deplored by the complaints and calamities of innocent persons, is still maintained among them upon
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this fixed principle, “that it is better two innocent persons should die, than one guilty live.”—Upon these principles the whole frame of their political government was formed; and it appears to have been the most tyrannical, fierce, and cruel, of any that has ever been practised in the world.

As the religious tenets of the modern Turks and Moors are different, in many parts, from those which were originally taught by Mahomet, I shall here take a cursory view of the principal of their religious ceremonies, and articles of belief.—They believe in one God, creator of heaven and earth, who will recompense the good, and punish the wicked; the former in Paradise, and the latter in Hell: they believe that Mahomet was a great prophet, whom God sent into the world to teach mankind the way to salvation, and called them Musselmans, or the resigned in God: they believe in the laws of Moses, and are obliged to observe them.—Friday is the day of rest among them, as Sunday is among the Christians; on which day they assemble themselves in their temples at twelve o’clock to offer up their public prayers. They are obliged to pray in public and in private, five times a day; namely, in the morning, at noon, in the evening when the sun sets, and at one o’clock in the night. During the month of the moon which they call Ramazan, they neither eat nor drink all the day till after the sun is set; but, during the night, they eat and drink as much as they think proper, of flesh and fish, except swine’s flesh

flesh and wine, which are forbid them at all times. After this, which they call fasting, they have the feast of the great Bairan, as the Christians have Easter after Lent. They are charitable to the poor, and are obliged to give, on the first day of the year, the tenth of all that they have gained the preceding year, for the support of those who cannot support themselves. They believe, that after having well bathed and washed their bodies, and said a prayer that is appropriated to this ceremony, they have the soul likewise cleansed from all sin and wickedness; which is the reason that they so often wash themselves, especially before they say their prayers. They continue the ceremonies of circumcision in the same form that they were heretofore taught by Mahomet. They believe that the Alcoran was brought to Mahomet, at different times, by the angel Gabriel, in the city of Mecca; because that the Jews and the Christians had altered the holy Scriptures, and the law of God. Marriage is still continued among them upon the same plan that was regulated by Mahomet; but they may quit their wives whenever they please, on paying them what was promised by their respective contracts of marriage, and re-marry themselves as they shall think proper; however, the women are obliged to wait so long as to be well assured that they are not with child before they can marry again, and the husbands are obliged to keep, and to take proper care of, the children. Those children which they have by their slaves or mistresses,

mistresses, are placed upon the same footing with those which they have by their wives, and are all regarded as legitimate. They do not believe that Jesus Christ was God or the Son of God, neither do they believe in the Trinity; but they say, that Jesus Christ was a great prophet, born of a virgin, and that he was conceived by divine inspiration, without a father, as Adam was created without a mother:—they say that he was not crucified, but that God took him up into heaven, and that he will come again upon the earth, before the end of the world, to confirm the law of Mahomet: they also assert that the Jews, supposing that they were crucifying Jesus Christ, only crucified one of their own people who resembled him. They have the greatest veneration for the cities of Mecca and Medina in Arabia; because that Mahomet was born in the former, and buried in the latter: they go in pilgrimage to those places, by way of penitence, and carry thither innumerable presents of great value, to offer up to the shrine of Mahomet. They pray to God to pardon their sins; and likewise pray to their saints, of which they have a great number, to intercede for them: but the principal part of them believe, that the soul and the body continue together in the grave till the day of judgment. They have not the use of bells among them, but at the hour of prayer, their priests mount up into a tower, which is at one corner of the temple, and with a loud voice call the people to prayers, which are sung in the manner that we sing

sing the cathedral service.—Upon the whole, notwithstanding all the works, and the whole conduct of Mahomet, clearly shew him to have been a wicked impostor of the worst kind, who, under the cloak of religion, wanted to establish his temporal authority over mankind, and to gratify his lusts and passions; yet, as his Alcoran contains here and there some good and moral precepts, which he copied from the New Testament, and from the laws of Moses; and as he taught the belief in, and adoration of one God, it is generally supposed, that his form of religion has done good, in many parts; especially in India, Persia, Tartary, Arabia, and Africa, by drawing great numbers of people from the grossest scenes of idolatry, and bringing them at least to the belief of the Supreme Being; and the more particularly, as Christianity was so much corrupted, in those days, by Arianism, by the heresies, and by the wicked examples of many of the pretended teachers of the Christian doctrines. Indeed the Greeks, who abound in the Turkish dominions at present, have so disfigured the Christian religion, by a multitude of ceremonies, by the veneration, I had almost said adoration, of images, and by the principles of Arianism which they have still retained, that, except believing that Mahomet was not so great a prophet as Jesus Christ, I see very little difference between their religion and that of the Mussulmans.

Whoever has read the Alcoran, will undoubtedly join with me, in thinking it one of the most

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extraordinary

extraordinary books that ever was wrote. The author was certainly well acquainted with the Old and New Testament, and has collected therefrom many good pieces of morality ; but he has mixed them with such a rhapsody of incoherent chimeras, contradictions, and such oblique flights of an apparently distempered imagination, that it is impossible for any person to discover exactly thereby, what were his ideas when he wrote it ; although he tells his followers, in the Chapter of Women, that it was written to confirm the Bible. —We may easily discover throughout the whole, an air of enthusiasm, of sensuality, and of violence, which were the distinguishing characteristics of this man ; although every chapter of this book begins with representing God as full of mercy and clemency. He calls himself the first and greatest prophet of God, and says that the angel Gabriel brought the Alcoran from heaven ; but it is evident, that he has copied almost all the principal parts of the New Testament, which was long before published in the world. In the chapter before mentioned, he says that the Messias, Jesus the son of Mary, was the prophet and apostle of God, his Word, and his Spirit, which he sent to Mary. And he says, in the Chapter of Ornaments, and that of the Mountain, that he shall come again upon the earth, to announce the day of judgment and the resurrection from the dead ; when all the faithful, said he, who have obeyed my commandments, shall enter into Paradise ; “ you and your
“ wives

“ wives shall rejoice therein ; you shall drink out
 “ of cups of fine gold, and find every thing there
 “ that you shall desire ; you shall eat and drink of
 “ whatever you please, and repose yourselves
 “ upon ornamented beds. You shall frequently
 “ be re-married with women who have the most
 “ beautiful eyes, and with whom you shall live
 “ in perfect felicity to all eternity, as a reward
 “ for your fidelity and good works. But the
 “ wicked shall live eternally in the fire of hell ;
 “ and for their disobedience, shall know no end of
 “ their miseries.”—And again, in the Chapters
 of the Merciful, and of the Judgment, he says,
 “ that the faithful shall live in Paradise, in de-
 “ licious gardens, where they shall enjoy the
 “ shade, with the most refreshing fruits and foun-
 “ tains, of which they shall eat and drink at their
 “ pleasure. They shall likewise there enjoy the most
 “ beautiful women, with large black eyes, and their
 “ skin as white as a lilly ; and who will not turn
 “ off their eyes from their husbands, whom they
 “ will prefer to men and angels. Moreover, God
 “ has created the virgins of Paradise, who are as
 “ white as the most delicate pearls, and are
 “ particularly affectionate to their husbands, for
 “ to content all those who shall be found on the
 “ right hand of the Great Judge at the last day :
 “ but those who shall be placed on the left hand,
 “ shall be continually tormented with a hot wind ;
 “ they shall drink continually of boiling water,
 “ and shall be cast into a black, hot, and stink-

“ing pit, because they have not observed the
 “commandments of God; which torments will
 “be considerably increased, if they have gone
 “after any other women but their own wives or
 “slaves.” There is no part in all the Alcoran
 which gives us so just an idea of the character of
 its author, as the chapters before mentioned; nor
 wherein he has so clearly expressed himself; for
 in all the other chapters, we find nothing but con-
 fusion and contradiction; and consequently we
 may easily form a judgment of this prophet from
 his works.

At a time when there was such a diversity of
 opinions in those parts of Asia and of Africa;
 when the opportunity of propagating a new sys-
 tem of religion was so favourable, and when the
 greatest part of the inhabitants of those countries
 were in such a state of ignorance, if the happiness
 and welfare of his fellow-creatures had at all en-
 tered into his plan, Mahomet might have done
 much towards the reforming of the Gentile
 world; especially as he was assisted by the moral
 precepts of Moses and of Jesus Christ; and with-
 out laying his followers under the obligation of
 destroying all kinds of learning and enquiry
 among themselves, thereby have gained a great
 and immortal name.

THALES, Pythagoras, Democritus, Socrates,
 Plato, Zenophon, Aristotle, and Epicurus, al-
 though they had none of the lights which revela-
 tion

tion has afforded, to form the moral character of mankind, yet by the systems of morality which they respectively taught their followers, not only by precept, but by example, they drew great numbers of people out of that gross ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, which then prevailed in the world, and which were a disgrace to human nature.—Those great ancients made a noble entry upon the theatre of the world; as their opinions were corroborated by their examples. They did not, like Des Cartes, Hobbes, and some other modern philosophers, endeavour to propagate systems which they did not believe themselves. Des Cartes, in particular, when among his friends, always called his philosophy his romance; and both he and many of the materialists published their schemes of philosophy, as Nostradamus did his prophecies, only for their amusement, and without either of them believing any part of what they published themselves.—Many of our pretended modern philosophers have endeavoured to discredit Pythagoras; and assert that he was a lawgiver, but by no means a philosopher. It is certain that Pythagoras was desired to form the civil constitution of a state in which he lived in Italy, and had the misfortune to perish by a sedition in the government he had formed; so that there remain no records or traces of any of his civil institutions: but, on the other hand, his philosophical and moral precepts, the principal of which have been already observed, have been esteemed in

all ages ; and, from his time to this day, by all learned nations and people, he has been regarded as the prince of philosophers, and to have as much excelled in all natural and moral knowledge, as in modesty and diffidence of himself. From him both Socrates and Plato derived their principles of virtue and morality : nor was the memory of any other philosopher so adored by all his followers ; nor any of their instructions so successful in forming the moral characters of the greatest men of those ages. But to discredit all the fountains from whence this great philosopher is said to have drawn his knowledge, many modern philosophers are at a loss to discover for what purpose he should have gone to Delphos ; and also how the priestesses of Apollo there should have been famous for discovering secrets in natural as well as in moral philosophy ; supposing, undoubtedly, that this oracle was managed by some good old women of Endor, by Hecate, or by some of the society of the weird sisters ; whereas it is well known, that the Pythias were only machines, managed by the priests of Delphos, who, like those of Egypt, were a society of the most learned men in natural and moral philosophy that those ages produced, whose knowledge was wholly applied to the honour and service of their oracle : nothing but the wise counsels, the prudent answers, or ingenious, although ambiguous evasions, of those Delphic priests, could have supported the credit of that oracle for such a number of ages.

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It does not appear that morality, and the reformation of mankind, was ever a principal study among the Syrians, Chaldeans, or Egyptians; because, during the sunshine of learning in those countries, the bulk of the people appear to have been fallen into the grossest scenes of idolatry and superstition; and all their Magi, and wise men, seem to have made Magic, judicial astrology, and some of the more common arts and sciences, the great objects of their enquiry.—The Ptolemies, in after ages, during the quiet and felicity of many reigns, took every method to introduce the study of moral philosophy into Egypt; particularly by the great encouragement which they gave to their priests, and by the collection of that vast library at Alexandria: but they could not succeed; all the knowledge of the priests was turned to superstition and mystery, initiations and expiations, the procuring or foretelling events, by mystical sacrifices or magical operations; which lasted indeed for many ages, but without either credit or esteem among the wiser part of the world.

AFTER having taken a cursory view of the nations which formed the heathen world, and of the different forms of worship which they offered up to, what they supposed to be, the God of nature, and the great governor of the world, at least as far as we have any history thereof: let us now turn our attention towards the Israelites; a people who have made a great figure upon the

theatre of the world; a people who are said to have been the chosen of the Great God of heaven and earth, because their ancestors served him in purity and holiness; and a people of whom we have the most ancient, and the most extraordinary, history of any at present existing. I am well aware that great objections will be made to the ancient Jewish history, by many of our modern philosophers, as containing much allegory and fiction, some things which appear to be very absurd in themselves, and many more which are contrary to the laws of God and nature; and from thence they would attempt to deny the greatest part of the facts, which Moses, and the other writers of that history, have asserted.—Before I proceed in my original plan, I shall beg leave, with great deference to superior judgment, to offer my opinion, in a cursory way, upon this matter, to attempt to remove the objections before-mentioned, and to prove that they do not at all tend to impeach the veracity of Moses, and of the other Jewish writers.

It is true, that many parts of the Old Testament, and particularly the books of Moses, are wrote in such an allegorical and figurative manner, that, at first sight, they will appear more like fables, than like matters of fact.—But when we consider that all the writings of those days were wrote in an allegorical and figurative style, and in verse, and that a great part, if not the whole, of the Old Testament, was wrote in the same manner, I see no reason why we should bear harder upon
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this history, than upon other writings which were cotemporary therewith, and of which we believe the principal facts, although not all the imaginary flights of the poets. There are very few people who will deny that there was such a place as Troy, that it was besieged for some time by the chiefs of the little Grecian states, and that it has afforded the subject-matter for one of the best epic poems that has ever appeared in the world ; but I am apprehensive, that it will be difficult to find any person who believes, that every part of that war was conducted and managed exactly as Homer has described it. Why then should we think that Moses, and the rest of the Jewish writers, because they followed in some measure the figurative manner of writing, which was then practised, and which undoubtedly they thought to be the best calculated for the people to whom they wrote, should have filled their history with false facts ? Or why should we be more backward to believe, that the Jewish heroes, with a handful of men, and, as they say, assisted by the Supreme God, should gain compleat victories over such an abandoned and effeminate people as the Canaanites, than that the same should have been done, by the Spaniards, in the conquest of America ? Moreover, the greatest part of the Jewish history was publicly known while the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, were great and learned nations ; and, if those mighty acts which Moses declared to have been done by him, in Egypt, and
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in Canaan, were not so as he has related them, those people would undoubtedly have contradicted them, for their own honour, as well as for the benefit of mankind. In all probability, if the world lasts three thousand years more, the histories which are wrote in our days, will appear, from our manner of writing, as fabulous to the inhabitants which will then be upon the earth, as the history of Moses does to many at present.

That all the books, and other writings, which were wrote in the early ages of the world, were wrote in verse, is generally admitted. The ancients employed poetry for the instruction of mankind in religion and morals, as well as to inspire them with heroic sentiments. The Edda, and all the pieces which remain of the ancient mythology of the north, are in verse; the Druids assumed the same holy offices; they directed the modes of divine worship; taught the moral duties; sung the praises of valour, and the charms of liberty, all in the allegorical and enchanting strains of poetry. But, in the east, the poet enveloped his inventions more in mysterious allegory, and divine mythology, and rather endeavoured to raise the mind to heavenly contemplations, than to instruct it in the common affairs of life. Aristotle says, that the Agathyrsi had all their laws in verse; and Tacitus tells us, that the Germans had no annals, or records, but what were wrote in this manner. The Grecian oracles were likewise delivered in verse; and Pliny relates it as a thing well known, that

Phærecides

Phærecides, who lived about the time of Cyrus, was the first who wrote prose in the Greek tongue;—whereas Homer and Hesiod lived some hundreds of years before that age; and Orpheus, Linus, and Musæus, some hundreds of years before them. What Solon and Pythagoras wrote is said to have been in verse, and they were before the time of Cyrus; and before them were Archilochus, Simonides, Tyrtaeus, Stesichorus, and several others, who wrote in the same manner. All the writings of the ancient Chaldeans and Syrians were likewise wrote in verse.—The most ancient part of the Old Testament is supposed to be the book of Job, which was wrote long before the time of Moses; and is said to have been a translation into Hebrew out of the old Chaldean language. And it is out of all controversy that this book was originally a poem, upon the subject of the power and justice of God, and in vindication of his providence, against the general arguments of wicked men, who took occasion to dispute it, from the common events of human life; whereby so many wicked and impious men seem to be happy, and prosperous, in the course of their lives, and so many just and pious men miserable and afflicted. Ferrara, who pretends to understand Hebrew better than any other translator of the Bible, gives us the two first chapters of the book of Job in prose, as an historical introduction, and all the rest in verse, except some lines at the end, which he regards as the conclusion of the

work. Job is supposed to have been of the race of Heber, who lived in Chaldea, where some few of the inhabitants in those early days, offered sacrifices to, and adored, one God, without any idol or representation, although the bulk of the people were then fallen into atheism, and idolatry.—If we suppose the books of Moses to have been the first that were written in the Hebrew tongue, then we may justly regard the song of Moses, after the Israelites were delivered from the Egyptians, to have been written before the rest, as Moses had not the opportunity in Egypt to write a history of what he was daily performing; and notwithstanding this song is at present translated in prose, we find in it such true and noble strains of poetry as the greatest authors of antiquity can scarcely equal. We find the same style in the other song of Moses, which was wrote a little before his death, and in many other parts of his books; from whence we may judge, that the greatest part, if not the whole, of his works were written originally in verse. Moses was brought up in, and had imbibed, the learning of mysterious Egypt; and found that, to lead and govern a rebellious people, he could not totally divest himself of the mysterious allegory, in which he had likewise been nurtured in this country.—The psalms of David, and all the writings of Solomon, were originally in verse; and, if we may judge from the style of the books of the Prophets, the greatest part of them, if not the whole, were wrote in the same manner.

manner. Upon the whole, I see no reason why we should from hence dispute the facts set forth in the Jewish history, more than those in the Egyptian, Grecian, or any other ancient history. And surely the Egyptians, when they read, in the books of Moses, of the mighty works which he did in their country, and in Canaan, would have contradicted them, and set the world right, respecting that important matter, if they were not strictly true.

The Israelites called themselves the chosen people of God, because they were descended from Abraham, who lived in the ninth generation after Shem, the son of Noah, from whom he was descended, and who worshipped and adored the great God of heaven, in purity, when almost all the inhabitants of the land, wherein he lived, were in a state of idolatry, or of atheism. God is said, by his angel, to have spoke to Abraham, to have promised him a son in his old years, and that his seed should inherit the land of Canaan, where he then only sojourned; and afterwards, when he obeyed the commandment of God, which was only given to prove him, and was ready to offer up his only son, for a burnt sacrifice, upon the altar, he promised that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, and that a great and powerful nation should descend from that son. The Jewish history likewise sets forth, that the inhabitants of all the land of Canaan, and of the neighbouring nations, were fallen into a state of the grossest idolatry,

idolatry, and into a species of unnatural wickedness, which made them more brutal, and unlike rational creatures, than the beasts; for which two of their cities were destroyed by fire. It is moreover said, that God, by his angel, made the same promise unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, which he had made to Abraham, they being, in those days, the only persons upon the earth who served him in purity, and integrity of heart. For mankind were so much given to idolatry, that the latter of those patriarchs had the greatest difficulty, notwithstanding all his piety, to keep his own house free from idols, and his household from worshipping of strange gods.

By the wickedness of Jacob's sons, in selling their own brother into Egypt to be a slave, and from a great famine which afterwards happened in those countries, Jacob and all his family went down into Egypt; and, the now called Israelites or Hebrews, dwelt there for two or three generations in peace; but their descendants were afterwards made slaves to the Egyptians, and used with great cruelty, for near 400 years, before they were delivered, in a most miraculous manner, by Moses, one of the most extraordinary men that ever appeared upon the face of the earth.

Moses was born of Hebrew parents, but, from the cruelty with which the descendants of Israel were treated, in those days, by the Egyptians, was cast into the flags, and afterwards found by

Pharaoh's

Pharaoh's daughter, brought up, as her son, in Pharaoh's house, and in all the learning and luxury of Egypt. But, from motives which do not appear to us at present, he left all this, and joined himself to his brethren, although they were then slaves; and, by endeavouring to revenge their wrongs, was forced to fly out of Egypt. Surely a man of Moses's great talents would never have quitted the situation he was in, being regarded as Pharaoh's grandson, to join himself with slaves, except he had been led thereto, by some innate principles of goodness, which he was too modest to describe.—The history which he gives us of the mighty works which he afterwards did, before Pharaoh, in Egypt, by the immediate order and assistance of the Divinity, and of the attempts which the Egyptian magicians made to do the same, is related with such an air of candor, and of modesty, he taking nothing upon himself, but attributing even the most minute circumstance to the Great Being who directed him, that it carries conviction upon the face of it. But this great scene was continued, by leading the Israelites out of Egypt through the Red-sea, and, at the same time, drowning all the hosts of Pharaoh therein; an act so notoriously public, although so wonderful in itself, that no Egyptian, Greek, Roman, or any other ancient writer, has ever attempted to deny it.

When Moses had delivered the children of Israel from their Egyptian masters, by such wonderful

derous works as had never before been heard of upon earth, and gained such an immortal name, at the head of 600,000 men, instead of following the plan that was pursued by Mango Copac, Odin, Mahomet, and others, leading this great army immediately into Canaan, a rich and fertile country, inhabited by a people effeminate, and abandoned to all kinds of vice, who at that time were an easy conquest, and becoming their prince; he led them to and fro in the wilderness, for forty years, fed them in a miraculous manner, by manna and quails, and by water which he made to flow out of a dry rock, bore all their reproaches and murmurings with patience, and claimed nothing for himself, or for his family, but that of being the judge between them of their disputes and quarrels, which he executed in the most equitable and disinterested manner, and of explaining to them the laws, which he says he received from the most high God; and of which it will be necessary that we should hereafter take a cursory view.

If Moses had not been exactly in the situation that he declares himself to have been in, with respect to the children of Israel, and been directed in every thing by the divine power, certainly he never would have acted as he did, after he had led this people out of Egypt; and I believe it will be difficult to find another example in the history of the world, of any mortal man, who was not assisted by the immediate power of the
Divinity,

Divinity, acting with such meekness, such disinterestedness, and such an attachment to the welfare of his people; making their happiness the great and only object which he had in view; and striving even against their inclination, and rebellious disposition, to make them great, powerful, and good. For so stubborn were this people, and so disposed to fall into all the wickedness and idolatry of the Canaanites, and of the Egyptians, that, notwithstanding they had seen all the mighty works that God had done for them by the hand of Moses, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could keep them from worshipping strange gods. And, when Moses delayed to come down from mount Sinai, they said to Aaron, Make us gods to go before us; for this Moses, who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.—That a wicked, stiff-necked and rebellious rabble should fall into such excesses is not so much a matter of wonder; but that Aaron, who had just before been instrumental in doing the mighty works, which were done before Pharaoh, and in the wilderness, should immediately comply with the request of those people, make them a molten calf, build an altar before it, offer burnt-offerings thereon, and join with the rabble in crying out, “These are thy gods, O “Israel, which brought thee out of the land of “Egypt;” I say, that Aaron, who was Moses’s assistant, and appointed to be the Lord’s high-priest, should do those things, is what must fill us

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with amazement. If a man, who had just before beheld the mighty works of the Lord, and who was even instrumental in doing them, should so suddenly fall into the grossest scenes of idolatry and wickedness, to support a kind of superiority over a lawless and abandoned people, when he was left to himself, it is not so much to be wondered, that the Druids, the priests of Odin, or the Brachmans, should do the same, who apparently had no knowledge of the laws of the Supreme Being, but what they received from the lights of nature.

The laws which Moses is said to have received, for the Israelites, in mount Sinai, are such as, considering the then situation of this people, and their idolatrous and rebellious disposition, seem to be exceedingly well adapted to keep them in civil order, and to make them good and moral members of human society; for it does not appear that Moses ever informed them of the immortality of the soul, and that they were likewise to be rewarded, or punished, in another life.—The ten commandments have ever since been received, not only among the devout in the Jewish nation, but even in the Christian world, as the commandments of God, which were to be followed, and literally abided by; although a part of the second commandment, where God is said to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation, does not at all agree with the attributes of the Supreme Being, which we have since been taught by revelation. A just and merciful

ciful God can never punish an innocent person, because his grandfather, or great grandfather, was a wicked man: But we are to suppose that such rigour was absolutely necessary, in those days, to strike the Israelites with greater terror; because all the other commandments, and even the remaining part of the second commandment, are extremely well calculated to form a good and moral member of a well-regulated civil society.

Great objections have been made to the severity, and even apparent cruelty, of several of the laws of Moses; and many have from hence taken upon them to say, that it is impossible that such laws could have been dictated by a merciful God, which even Moses himself has represented him to be.—For we often find, that whole families, and thousands of apparently innocent persons, were cut off for the offences of a few wicked and rebellious wretches. I must own that the objection, at first sight, appears to have some foundation: But when we consider, on the other hand, that mankind are free agents here on earth, and that the Israelites were so debauched in principle, by the wickedness of the Egyptians, and of the Canaanites, of which they had been frequently eyewitnesses, and such slaves to their own unnatural lusts and passions, that Moses, with all this severity, could not, without the greatest difficulty, keep them in any tolerable civil order, and in obedience to the laws of the Lord their God, we ought not to condemn his conduct, which appears

to have been uniform throughout, not only as a wise, prudent, and disinterested judge, but as such an example of morality and goodness, as no mortal man has ever shewn before or since. Indeed many of his civil laws have been regarded with such esteem, through all ages, that they are made the basis of the civil laws of some of the best regulated governments in Europe to this day.— Even in his judicial capacity, it appears, that he was not desirous of concentrating the judgment of all kinds of cases in himself; for, when his father-in-law made him the proposition, he immediately appointed judges over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties, and over tens; and as well by his afterwards appointing the seventy elders to assist him in the more weighty affairs of the people.

But no part of the conduct of the Israelites proves them to be so depraved, and so base, in all their principles, as that of their threatening to stone Joshua and Caleb, who contradicted the false reports which the rest of the spies made of the land of Canaan, and would have made a captain to lead them back again into Egypt; and in their always joining with such individuals, as were wicked and rebellious, against Moses, although his whole conduct towards them appears to be like that of an indulgent father towards his children.—Moses frequently exhorted this people to obedience, and reminded them of the mighty works that God had done for them; but at the same time declaring, that it was not for their good deeds, or righteousness,

ness, that they were led up out of Egypt, but that they were to be the instruments to destroy the ancient inhabitants of Canaan, whose unaccountable wickedness had defiled the land : For which reason he ordered them to destroy all the people of Canaan, wherever they came, both men, women, and children, and to burn their cities, and all their effects, lest they should thereby be led into the same horrid scenes of wickedness, of which the others had been guilty, and which were an abomination before the Lord. And, for this reason likewise, he forbid the Israelites to have any communion with the neighbouring nations, who were gross idolaters, lest they should draw them, or their children, into their idolatry. But, notwithstanding this wise precaution of Moses, we find that this was afterwards the cause of the destruction of this people.

Another wise and prudent regulation which Moses made to keep the Israelites in civil order, and in obedience to the laws which he laid before them, was, that of endeavouring to preserve a perfect equality among them ; and that no individuals, or particular families, by growing too powerful, should attempt thereby to gain a superiority over the others, and to disturb the civil order of the state ; which, considering the turbulent and rebellious disposition of this people, they might easily have done ; and this was by ordering, that the inheritance of each tribe, and of each family, should always remain in such tribe, or in

such family; that it should always descend either in a direct or in a collateral line; and where there were no sons, that daughters should inherit; but then the latter were always obliged to marry into their own tribe, and into their own family; so that the inheritance continued still in the same tribe, and in the same family, so long as any of that tribe and of that family remained.

It appears from Moses's history *, that in those days there were no people upon the face of the earth who were not more or less idolaters; and therefore, one of the most severe of all his laws, is, that against any prophet, or any other person who should endeavour to entice the people secretly to idolatry, particularly to the idolatry of the ancient inhabitants of Canaan; who were not content with endeavouring to overturn the orders of nature by their unheard-of wickedness, but they burnt their own children in the fire before their idols. Moses saw the disposition of this people to fall into the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, and therefore he was the more severe, not only in punishing those among them who should endeavour to entice the people to commit those abominations, but also in his orders for destroying all the ancient inhabitants of those countries, and to leave none of them remaining, who might teach the Israelites their abominable practices.

Some of our modern philosophers have taken upon them to laugh at Moses, and to make him

* Deuter. chap. 13. ver. 7.

the object of their ridicule, because of the catalogue of meats clean, and of meats unclean, which he left with the Israelites ; and assert, that many of those beasts, fishes, and fowls, which he forbid this people to eat, are eat in all Christian countries, and are found to be good and wholesome food. I will by no means attempt to say what were Moses's reasons for forbidding the Israelites to eat of those meats which he calls unclean, or how far they may be prejudicial to the human body in a moral or a religious sense ; but this I will take upon me to say, that after having well examined the catalogue of the Jewish lawgiver's unclean meats, there is not one article thereof which is not physically detrimental to the human body ; and, if we should continue to eat of it, which would not be a certain, though a slow poison to us ; and would be still more so to a people who lived in such a hot climate as that of the land of Canaan ; and who were much subject to the leprosy. So that, upon the whole, if this was not of divine institution, I should regard Moses as one of the greatest philosophers and physicians that the world ever produced.—In fact, by taking a brief survey of the laws, ordonnances, and civil institutions of Moses, we shall find therein a system of morality superior to any that we can discover to have been then existing ; and a code of civil laws, just and equitable in themselves, with respect to those who had contentions with each other, but extremely severe against those who

attempted to lead the people into the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, and against those who were rebellious against their legislator; which, as I have often already observed, was absolutely necessary to keep a people to their duty who were so stubborn and turbulent, and so much disposed to adopt all the abominable scenes of wickedness and idolatry of their neighbours.

Moses was in himself such an example of goodness, meekness, disinterestedness, and compassion, when offences were particularly against him, his whole attention being to promote the good of his people, and to keep them in the pure worship of the Lord their God, that, exclusive of the great works which he did in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in Mount Sinai, I should not hesitate to say his legation was divine.—All the ingratitude which the Israelites shewed towards him, was not sufficient to change his behaviour towards them in the least: but as soon as they shewed the least signs of repentance, he was again their kind and indulgent Father, praying to God to pardon them, and to prosper their endeavours.—When he found himself drawing near to the end of his life, he called all the people together, and gave them a particular charge to put their whole trust in their great God and deliverer; recapitulated all their acts of rebellion and ingratitude against God, and his great mercies towards them, when they repented of their wickedness; exhorted them to continue in the fear and obedience of the Almighty;

mighty ; and appointed Joshua, the son of Nun, to be his successor, and to lead them into the land of Canaan ; because he was the most just, wise, and upright man that was found among all the Israelitish nation. Moses did not think that either of his sons, or of his relations, was worthy to be recommended to this important trust ; and therefore, rejecting every consideration of interest, and in strict obedience to the Divine commands, he appointed Joshua to succeed him. But before he died, he foretold them, that after his death they would fall into all the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, and of all the evils that would happen to them in consequence thereof ; and that, towards the latter days, the Lord their God would raise up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto him, who would explain his will unto them ; and that they should hear that prophet, because the Lord would put his words in his mouth, and through him declare his will to mankind.

After Moses's death, Joshua, like a great and prudent general, led the Israelites over Jordan, and conquered all the land of Canaan, still adhering to the laws and institutions of Moses, and keeping the people in the pure worship of the God of heaven. But no sooner was Joshua dead, than the people neglected to drive out the ancient inhabitants of the land, as Moses and he had commanded them ; and after the death of Eleazar, and of the elders of the people, who had

had seen the great works of Moses, and which followed soon after, they fell into all the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, and neglected the pure worship of their Great Deliverer; for which, according to their chronicles, they were much oppressed and plundered by their enemies on every side; but as often as they repented of their wickedness, and returned from their idolatry, judges and generals were raised up from among themselves to deliver them; although they still continued in a very distressed situation, sometimes following the idolatry of their neighbours, and at other times calling upon the name of the Lord their God, till the days of David, when they became a great and a powerful people, and were the terror of all the neighbouring nations.

David is said to have destroyed all kinds of idolatry among this people; to have cut off all the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities, who were the greatest idolaters, and to have left the kingdom to his son Solomon, in the pure worship of the great God of Heaven.

Solomon, in his youthful days, shewed such an example of piety, morality, and wisdom, that he was the admiration of all that part of the world. Indeed his works, which are still existing, shew him to have been such. But this same Solomon, although he built the great temple at Jerusalem for the worship of the Supreme Being, in the latter part of his life, by giving too much into the love of women, by trusting too much to his own strength

strength and riches, and to the flattery of deceitful persons, not only suffered himself to be drawn into the grossest scenes of idolatry, and built several temples and high places for the idols of the neighbouring nations near to Jerusalem, but he likewise drew the people into the same abominable practices, even to offer up their own children as burnt sacrifices to Moloch, and to the idols of the Ammonites.—Here is such a striking example of the depravity of human nature, when unassisted by our Great Creator and Protector, as perhaps such another is not to be found in the history of the world. Solomon, in his youthful days, was more esteemed for his wisdom and morality than any of the great philosophers of antiquity; but when he suffered himself to be led away by the violence of his passions, and when he checked that innate voice of nature and of reason, which is the sure guide and director of every rational creature, as it is the ordinary means which the Supreme Being has established to protect and support us, the degeneracy and bad conduct of this once shining example of wisdom and morality, made him a real object of contempt, and the most miserable of all wretches.

From the time of Solomon 'till the captivity of Israel and of Judah, the former into Syria, and the latter into Babylon, this people were, for the most part, in a constant scene of the grossest idolatry. Indeed several good kings and prophets rose up during this period, and endeavoured to
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check this torrent of abomination: but it was only for a moment; the people, who were naturally disposed to fall into the idolatry of the ancient inhabitants of Canaan, were now so corrupted and habituated therein, that although the prophet Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume his burnt sacrifice, and to convince them of his being sent from God, to draw them out of their abominable practices, and of the wickedness of Baal's prophets, they attempted to kill him the next day.—When they were oppressed by their enemies, and threatened with immediate destruction, they cried to the God of Heaven to deliver them; but as soon as they saw that their enemies were subdued, they fell again into their former scenes of idolatry. Besides worshipping the idol gods of the Canaanites, and offering up their children as burnt sacrifices to Moloch, they worshipped the sun, the moon, and all the host of heaven, till the governments of Israel and of Judah were destroyed, and the people carried away captive into Syria, and into Babylon. All the exhortations and remonstrances of the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, appeared to them as idle tales. The mighty works which were done by the two former of these prophets, had no effect upon this stubborn and degenerate people; and the prophecies and exhortations of Isaiah and of the other prophets, made no impression upon this hardened race; who, although they have been called the chosen people of God, have constantly
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shewn such a depravity of manners, such a thirst after idolatry, and such a stubbornness to continue in every thing that was wicked, as has not been equalled by any other nation upon the face of the earth. This has undoubtedly been the character of the bulk of the people, although they have been the eye-witnesses of all the mighty works which God has shewn among them, by his prophets, and even by Jesus Christ himself.

Isaiah foretold them particularly of the coming of Jesus Christ, and of the mighty works which he would do among the remnant of the Israelites which should then inhabit the land of Judah. His name, says this prophet, shall be called *Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, and the government shall be upon his shoulders*. He prophesied also, that he should be born of a virgin, that he should be a Redeemer, that the Gentiles should trust in him, although the Jews rejected him as they had done Moses and all the other prophets.—Jeremiah prophesied also of the coming of Jesus Christ; who, said this prophet, was to arise out of the house of David, who was to execute judgment and justice in the earth, and who was to be called *The Lord our Righteousness*. All the other inferior prophets prophesied to the same purpose.

After the government of Judah was destroyed, and the greatest part of the people carried away captive into Babylon, they began to repent of their former wickedness, and to cry again to the
God

God of Heaven to deliver them out of their bondage: whereupon, as their history observes, in the first year of the reign of Cyrus the Persian, who had now conquered Babylon, and who was a worshipper of one God, this prince published a proclamation throughout all his empire, that the Israelites should return again into Judea, and rebuild the temple of Solomon, and the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and, in consequence thereof, great numbers of the descendants of those who had been made captive by Nebuchadnezzar, returned again to Jerusalem, and re-built the walls of that city, and the temple of Solomon; and for some time followed the law of Moses, and worshipped the God of Heaven. But afterwards their priests, who had learnt the language, and who were instructed in the mysteries of the Chaldeans, finding the law of Moses, as they imagined, in many respects too rigid for a people who were much disposed to follow the torrent of their lusts and passions, and who had seen all the Babylonish and Chaldean luxury; and with all that, who were naturally disposed to be turbulent and rebellious, gave such explanations thereto as they thought proper; so that, although they kept up the form of the Mosaical institution, the spirit of it was soon lost among them. Happily for this people, they were kept in some order by the persecutions which they suffered from the credit of their enemies at the court
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of Persia; otherwise, if we may judge from their natural propensity to idolatry, they would have fallen again into the same state that they were in before they were carried away into Babylon.

When Judea was afterwards conquered by the Greeks, they at the same time introduced their learning and language into this country. Before this time there were no divisions or sects among the Jews, but such as followed the true prophets or the false, and such as worshipped the God of Heaven, or the idolatrous gods of the neighbouring nations. With the Grecian language and learning entered their philosophy; and from this was formed the two great sects of Pharisees and Sadducees: the Pharisees, as far as the law of Moses, that was now, from the frequent explanations which the priests had given it, but the shadow of what it was originally, would permit them, in all their opinions, followed the philosophy of Plato: the Sadducees, that of Epicurus. The first professed the strictest rules of virtue and vice, the hopes and fears of rewards and punishments in another world, and the existence of angels and spirits separate from bodies: but the Sadducees believed little or nothing of any of these, further than to cover themselves from the hatred and persecution of the other sect, which was the most popular. In this state was the Jewish nation when John the Baptist began to preach among them, and when the Messias appeared upon earth. They had a form of godliness, although they denied

nied the power thereof. Indeed, after the introduction of the Grecian philosophy among them, and the forming of the sects of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, we find no more traces of their ancient idolatry. They blended this philosophy with some parts of the Mosaical institution, and at least kept up some form of the worship of the God of Heaven. They waited for the coming of the Messias, and for the fulfilling of the prophecies of their old prophets; but when he came among them, because he did not come in Asiatic pomp, to put their nation upon the same footing that it was in during the reigns of David and Solomon, which they supposed would have been the case, they rejected him, as their fathers had done all the rest of the prophets, although the prophecy of *Isaiah* * was thereby strictly fulfilled.

BUT before we proceed to examine that pure system of morality and worship of the Supreme Being, which was taught mankind by Jesus Christ, let us turn our attention again, for a moment, upon the different nations and people of the world which have already been described, upon the inhuman and superstitious forms of worship which they offered up to their idol gods, or to the host of Heaven, and upon the variety of manners and characters of those people, and we shall find, notwithstanding all those seeming contradictions, that uncorrupted nature teaches every where the same

* Chap. 53. and 54.

lessons of justice and of honesty, which the human race owe to each other; and that mankind have always been unanimous in the opinion, that they owed an adoration and worship to some superior being or beings. It is true we frequently find their ideas of those masters much confused, particularly in their worship of a divinity, from the warmth and irregularities of their passions, or from the artful insinuations of cunning and designing men, who have frequently endeavoured to corrupt the people, to confuse their understandings, and to make even their religious principles subservient to their wicked and ambitious designs. History likewise furnishes us with some examples, where the pure voice of nature has predominated, dispersed that chaos of superstition and idolatry in which the greatest part of the world were heretofore enveloped, and taught her faithful sons that there was a God, who was the creator and protector of all created beings; that there was an immortal part united to their mortal bodies, which would exist to all eternity, and which would be happy or miserable, according to the works which they did upon earth: But I cannot find one example, where any human being was made acquainted with the attributes of the Supreme Being, from the light of nature only. Socrates, Plato, and Pliny, as I have already observed, were sensible that this could not be done, and so were some of their followers, and felt much for the degenerate and unhappy situation of their fellow-creatures.

The ancient Scythians or Celts, who are said to have been the descendants of Japhet, seem to have had, in general, the clearest ideas of the Supreme Being and of a future state, which continued among them 'till they formed connections with the southern nations, and fell, in some measure, into that gross idolatry which the latter seem to have adopted from the most early ages of the world. During the time of the patriarch Abraham, it was already become a part of their worship to offer up their own children as burnt sacrifices to their idol gods; for it appears, that when the angel of the Lord ordered this patriarch to offer up Isaac, his only son, as a burnt sacrifice, he had no idea that this order was only to prove his faith and obedience to the divine commands, as this practice was at that time so common in the country where he lived.

The Indian Brachmans, the Magi, the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, and the greatest part of the Greek and Roman philosophers, who trusted entirely to their learning and philosophy, not only fell themselves into the grossest superstition and idolatry, but by their examples drew some millions of people into the same wretched situation: but those who, like Socrates and his faithful followers, saw the insufficiency of human reason to fathom the mysteries of the Supreme Being, and obeyed the pure and uncorrupted voice of nature, have not only outshined all the others in the purity

rity of their morals, but also in their examples of piety and virtue.

Confucius and Mango Copac, who seem to have had the clearest ideas of civil government, and who formed the civil institutions of two empires, which are worthy the imitation of more enlightened nations, appear to have had very imperfect ideas of the Deity and of a future state; and left the inhabitants of their respective countries in a state of idolatry, and in the grossest ignorance respecting these matters; although the Peruvians were, and the Chinese actually are, very well informed in every thing that regards civil society.

The inhabitants of Mexico and of North America were in a state of barbarity, ignorance, and inhumanity, equal to that wherein the people of Africa are to this day; and although they were called human beings, their ideas were so totally absorbed in a chaos of superstition and brutality, that, except from their form, we might suppose them to have been an order of beings of an inferior nature.

Odin seems rather to have been the cause of plunging the people of the northern nations into the most abominable scenes of idolatry and inhumanity, than to have in the least contributed to their reformation or civilization. He appears to have been one of those infamous hypocritical priests who, taking advantage of the simplicity and well-meaning disposition of their fellow-creatures, employ all their art and cunning to draw them

insensibly into their selfish and ambitious designs : for if we except Mahomet, history does not furnish us with a more infamous and detestable character than that of Odin ; who having knowledge, and the confidence of great and numerous nations, instead of endeavouring, like Mango Copac, Confucius, and others, to draw them out of the state of ignorance in which they were then absorbed, plunged them into scenes of the most abominable and inhuman idolatry, to promote his ambitious designs.

Mahomet, in a more enlightened age, and among people who had been informed of the mighty works which Moses had done for the Israelites, and who had as well been instructed in the pure and refined moral and doctrines of Jesus Christ, which were preached both by him and by his apostles, had nevertheless art and cunning enough, by giving into the humours, and flattering the passions, of a depraved race, first, insensibly by persuasion, and afterwards by force, to make them obey his laws and dictates ; although they were stamped with such striking marks of absurdity, libertinage, and tyranny, as must shock every person who was not equally ignorant, libertine, and tyrannical with himself ; and certainly, if his followers had not been forbid, under the most severe penalties, to enter into any enquiry about the truth, or probability, of his doctrines ; and, for the most part, been born and bred in hot and sultry climates, which warmed their passions, and rendered them almost

almost incapable of resisting those delicious prerogatives wherewith their great prophet and lawgiver had invested them ; it would not have been possible that the Mahometan religion could have existed for so many centuries.—It is true, Mahomet's doctrines have kept his followers out of those gross scenes of idolatry, into which the ancient Gentile world was plunged ; and even, in many places, drawn multitudes of people out of those abominable practices, to the knowledge of one God ; and so far, out of evil, some good has arisen : but, as this has been done by acts of violence and terror, and not by persuasion and conviction, and rather to gratify the ambition of this pretended prophet, and the ambitious views of some of his principal followers, than from any desire to promote the good and happiness of their fellow-creatures, they can claim no merit therefrom ; but we are to regard them as persons who, in consequence of their free agency, intended to do evil ; but nevertheless, the divine Providence has so ordered it, that their wicked designs have been productive of some good.

When we consider, on the other hand, the mighty works which Moses did in Egypt, and among the Israelites, of which, considering the allegorical manner of writing in those days, he has given us a history that appears to be clear, simple, uncontroverted, and void of all that pomp and self-sufficiency, with which we find the writings of some of the ancient, and of many of the modern philosophers filled : Moreover we find in this history,

and indeed in the whole character of Moses, such a zeal to promote the good of his people, and to establish the worship of the great God of Heaven among them, at the risk of every thing which he regarded upon earth, and even of his life, which was frequently in apparent danger for this purpose; and all this without any desire of recompence, but that which would be the consequence of having been the instrument whereby the Supreme Being promoted his great designs, consistent with the freedom of mankind as intelligent beings;—I say, when we take all this in view, together with the meekness and forgiving disposition of this great lawgiver, no part of which has ever been denied by any of the learned authors of antiquity, I think we cannot well hesitate to say, that he must have been a man inspired by God; and that his laws and doctrines were well calculated, at that time, to pave the way for drawing mankind out of those scenes of idolatry into which they were then plunged.

Many severe reflections have been thrown out against Moses, by some of our modern philosophers, for declaring that, when God sent him and Aaron to Pharaoh, to ask permission for the Israelites to depart out of Egypt, he at the same time told them, that he would harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not permit the Hebrews to depart; to the end that he might shew his miraculous power among the Egyptians;—and also for declaring that God had ordered him, and the Israelites, to destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan,

naan, both men, women, and children, and not to let any escape: For, say these philosophers, as the Supreme Being saw that the Egyptians, as well as the inhabitants of Canaan, were, at that time, in a state of the most abominable wickedness and idolatry, if he meant to reclaim them, his word was sufficient to turn their hearts in a moment, that they might see their errors, and adore their Creator; and not, like a merciless tyrant, to cut them off from the face of the earth; or by changing the orders of nature, to work miracles before them, which after all answered no purpose.

The voice of nature and of reason, as well as that of revelation, teaches us, that we are free agents here on earth, and that the Supreme Being has planted in us that divine and immortal instinct, that celestial voice called conscience, to be our sure guide, to point out to us, what is good, and what is bad; and, although our faculties are limited, has made us intelligent beings; but, at the same time, has left us free in all our actions: If therefore we reject, or stifle, that innate voice, appointed to be our guide and governor, and to make us, in some measure, like God himself, to be perfect judges of what is good, and of what is bad; and, by the violence and depravity of our passions, sink ourselves into such a state of refined wickedness, as well as of a savage brutality, that even the wild beasts of the forest, if they had faculties to comprehend it, would tremble to behold us, how are we to be reclaimed? As, by

our original institution, our actions are free; and, therefore, we can only form an idea of two ways to draw us out of this degenerate state; first, by changing our nature entirely, and new forming us; or, secondly, by reviving that innate voice of nature, which our degeneracy, and the violence of our passions, had choaked, or enveloped, in confusion and depravity. This appears to have been exactly the situation of the Egyptians, of the inhabitants of Canaan, and, in a great measure, of the Israelites, when Moses appeared among them; and this great prophet tells us, that the Supreme Being, seeing that those people were in this degenerate state, and that they had almost divested themselves of the excellencies of human nature, began with thundering in their ears, and shewing his miraculous powers among them, to rouse that divine and innate principle in their respective hearts, which they had almost suffocated; and, thereby, as a just and merciful God, to bring them again to a state of judging of their own wicked conduct, and how much they had offended their Creator and common father. But, when this means was not sufficient to draw those rebels out of their rebellious and depraved situation, from paying that adoration to stocks and stones, and to the works of men's hands, which they owed only to their Creator, and from making their bodies, which he had stamped after his own image, and invested with the prerogatives of intelligent beings, more base and servile than the

the worms which creep upon the earth, according to the ideas which our limited faculties are capable of forming of those matters, no other method remained, consistent with the freedom of human nature, but to cut them off from the earth, as corrupt and poisonous plants, that were capable of infecting the rest of the creation. This was the plan which Moses pursued, and I see no manner of reason whereby we can justly arraign his conduct, notwithstanding all that our modern philosophers have said to the contrary.

This great prophet, after having proved his divine authority by the mighty works which he did, and left no manner of doubt among the people of Israel, and even among many of the Egyptians, of his being sent from God, to draw the former out of the wretched state in which they were enveloped, held in one hand the laws, and the form of worship which they were to offer up to the God of heaven; at the same time promising the Israelites pardon for all their past offences, if they would be obedient, and submit to the laws and orders of God; and, in the other hand, fire and sword, to destroy all those who rebelled against them.—It does not appear to us what prophets, or preachers, were sent before among the inhabitants of Canaan, to lay before them the wicked and detestable state into which they were fallen, and to exhort them to repent, and to call upon the name of the Lord, before they were destroyed, except in the examples of Abraham and Lot, who
foretold

foretold the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities of this country, of their approaching ruin, and endeavoured to awaken the voice of nature within them, but in vain; but we are to suppose, from the justice and mercy of the Supreme Being, the common father of all the human race, that they were often before called upon to repent; and not only neglected those calls, but continued to plunge themselves deeper into the horrid state they were found in, when they were cut off by the Israelites.

Having given a brief account of the principal religions, forms of worshipping a Deity, and moral institutions, which, as we learn from the history of the world, have been practised in the different parts of the earth, together with the opinions of some of the principal philosophers of antiquity upon those subjects, I shall now proceed, in the first place, to give some account of the life and doctrines of Jesus Christ; secondly, as I originally proposed, to shew the superiority of those doctrines over all the others which have hitherto appeared in the world, for conducting mankind, as rational beings, through this life, and as well for preparing them for a future state; and, thirdly, to answer the principal objections which have been made to the Christian doctrines, by some writers of antiquity, by many modern philosophers, and by others who pretend to believe only a part of this religion, and to reject the rest.

IT has been already observed, that all the prophets, which arose among the Jewish nation, foretold the coming of this extraordinary man, to explain more particularly the will of the Supreme Being to mankind; Isaiah, in particular, pointed out all the circumstances which were to happen, during his abode upon earth, and as well those which would follow after;—namely, that he would be born of a virgin; that he would be rejected, and ignominiously treated, by the Jews; that he would be the chief corner-stone, and only hope, of the Gentiles; who would put their trust in him; and, in fact, that he was to be the mediator of the new covenant between God and mankind, and the intercessor, with the Father, for sinful man. The patriarch Jacob even prophesied of his coming, and told his sons that, “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come *.”—All the particulars which the prophets prophesied of him were fulfilled, in the manner and form, as they were foretold.—Socrates clearly points out the necessity of his coming, to reveal the will of the Deity more perfectly to mankind; and Plato, as I have already observed, has described him so clearly, that it is almost impossible for any man to mistake him.—At the time when Jesus Christ was born, in Bethlehem of Judah, all the Jewish nation expected him, from a persuasion that all those particulars which the prophets had written

* Gen. chap. xlix. ver. 10.

of him would be fulfilled : For when Herod, from the report of the wise men, heard that there was a king of the Jews born, he called together all the chief priests and scribes, and demanded of them where Christ should be born ; and they said unto him, in Bethlehem of Judah, for thus it is written by the prophet *.—It likewise appears from hence, that not only the Jewish nation, but also a part of the heathen world, were in expectation of this great event ; but whether the latter founded their belief upon the Jewish prophecies, or upon some other signs or tokens, which they had received themselves, does not appear ; but I am much inclined to think the latter ; otherwise the wise men would have been much at a loss, with all their science, to have discovered that the star which they saw announced the birth of a Messias.

The history of the birth of Jesus Christ, with all the extraordinary circumstances that attended it, is so clearly set forth by St. Matthew and by St. Luke, and so well known, that it would be needless for me to say any thing thereon ; except that we find he was born of a virgin, agreeable to what Isaiah had prophesied of him several hundred years before. Nothing particular is said of Jesus Christ during his childhood, except that, when he was only twelve years old, he left his reputed father, and his mother, and took his seat among the doctors, in the temple, to hear, and to ask them questions, and that all those who heard him

* Matthew, chap. ii. ver. 5.

were astonished at his understanding and answers; because it does not appear that he had had any education; and, when his mother spoke a little roughly to him, because he had left his father and her, at that age, he answered her, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"—but she did not understand what he meant. Afterwards, when he was baptized of John, it is said that, when he came up out of the water, the Spirit of God descended, in the form of a dove, upon him, in the sight of all those who were present, and a voice came from heaven, which said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."—Soon after this, Jesus began to shew himself to the world, and went throughout all Galilee preaching in their synagogues, and healing all manner of diseases among the people, of what nature soever; so that his fame went forth throughout all this part of the world, even through Syria and beyond Jordan; and great multitudes of people resorted to him; before whom he delivered the famous sermon on the mount; which contains the purest system of morality, and the most heavenly doctrine, that has ever yet appeared in the world: It is here that we find the attributes of a just and merciful God, and the care which he has for all his creatures, particularly described; it is here that we find the duties of an intelligent being, and rational creature, not only towards his Creator, but towards his fellow-creatures, clearly pointed out; it is here that we find the
dictates

dictates of that pure voice of uncorrupted nature, which speaks to every intelligent being, as the voice of God, so fully and clearly explained, that the meanest capacity cannot mistake it; and whoever reads this sermon with attention, will find it speaking to his heart, and giving him a full explanation to his own imperfect and limited ideas; it is here that we are taught humility, meekness, brotherly love, charity, and that god-like quality, forgiveness; it is here that we are taught to think poorly of ourselves, and of all our own merits, and to address the Father of spirits in prayer; in fact, it is here that we are taught to live like rational creatures, who are only passengers through this transitory life, and who are to prepare ourselves for a life eternal. And all those particulars, although they were preached apparently by a poor carpenter's son, are delivered with such a tone of majesty, sublimity, and, at the same time, simplicity, as the greatest philosophers could never imitate.

But it was not only the doctrine of Jesus Christ which drew such multitudes of people after him; his goodness of heart, and whole behaviour, were equally instructive with his doctrine; he cured all those sick and infirm people who applied to him for help; thereby fulfilling what Isaiah had prophesied of him, saying, "himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."—There was such humility, such sweetness, and such purity in all his manners, such feeling grace in his instructions,

structions, such a nobleness in his maxims, and such wisdom in his discourse, that every body beheld him with amazement. We find nothing, in his whole conduct, of the pomp, arrogance, or enthusiasm of an ambitious sectary; on the contrary, we find him associating with, and making his disciples of, poor fishermen, who were apparently equally illiterate with himself; telling the multitude, that his kingdom was not of this world; and endeavouring to draw the publicans and sinners out of their state of wickedness, rather than to set himself at the head of a party.

The Jews, seeing so much humility, meekness, and transcendent goodness, in a person who was preaching with such power, and doing such miraculous acts, were scandalized at him.—Full of their ideas of Asiatic grandeur, they could not conceive that their Messias and king would come in such a humble state; and, although they were filled with wonder, on hearing, and seeing, the mighty works which he did, they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?”—Even when John the Baptist heard of the mighty works which were done by Christ, he seemed to be at a loss how he should judge of him; as he had no idea that the Messias would come in such humility; and therefore he sent two of his disciples to Christ, who said unto him, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”—But, far from giving John a direct answer, he told his disciples to judge of him from his works, and to shew their master those things which they saw and heard:—“The

“ blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the
 “ lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are
 “ raised up, and the poor have the gospel preach-
 “ ed to them: And blessed is he whoever shall
 “ not be offended in me.”—We see from hence
 how hard it is for us to divest ourselves of our
 own supposed wisdom and self-sufficiency; and,
 although we perceive that our ideas are extremely
 limited, and we behold every thing as it were in a
 thick cloud, we still go on endeavouring to de-
 velop all the mysteries of the great God of heaven
 and earth; but, after all our enquiries, for se-
 veral thousands of years, we find ourselves totally
 ignorant of any thing more than what he has been
 pleased to reveal to us. I think this reflection
 alone would be sufficient to humble the pride and
 presumption of many of our modern philosophers,
 who appear to have such a high opinion of their
 own wisdom and judgment.

After Christ had seen how the wise and learned
 among the Jews were offended in him, because he
 did not come in a manner conformable to their
 ideas of grandeur, he said, “ I thank thee, O Fa-
 “ ther, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou
 “ hast hid those things from the wise and prudent,
 “ and hast revealed them to babes: Even so, Fa-
 “ ther, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”—And
 then, turning immediately to the multitude, he
 said, “ Come unto me all ye that labour and are
 “ heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take
 “ my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am
 “ meek

“ meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest
 “ unto your souls.”

The more we enquire into the doctrines and example of Jesus Christ, the more we must admire him; from finding therein a clear and just explanation of our own imperfect ideas of the attributes of the Supreme Being. We find here the great Creator of the universe described as a kind and indulgent Father, who, with open arms, is always ready to receive his undutiful children, when, from the irregularities of their passions, they have been drawn into disobedience, and incurred his displeasure.—But, that no man should mistake him in this important point, he has given us a clear and expressive description of a person, under the character of the prodigal son *, who had offended his Creator, and was plunged into such a scene of misery, that at length he was thereby brought to a sense of his own wretchedness: For, when this unhappy young man had spent all his substance in riotous living, and was ready to perish with hunger; when he had run his career of sin and wickedness; when he found his mortal part ready to fall into the dust, from whence it arose, and the violence of his passions abated; and when the feeble voice of nature, which he had before almost suffocated by his irregularities, told him that he was wretched, and ready to sink into endless misery; he came to himself, felt the justice of his wise conductor’s admonitions, and said,

• Luke xv.

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“ How

“ How many hired servants of my father’s have
 “ bread enough and to spare, and I perish with
 “ hunger ! I will arise and go to my father, and
 “ will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against
 “ Heaven, and before thee, and am no more
 “ worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one
 “ of thy hired servants.”—Under this similitude,
 we see the situation of every human being, who,
 from the weakness of our nature, has offended
 the great God of heaven, our common Father,
 and the wretched situation we are all in, from the
 violence and irregularities of our passions, and
 from our presumption as being free agents. Happy
 are those, therefore, who can conquer their pas-
 sions, and divest themselves of their own self-suf-
 ficiency, so much, as to hear the reproofs of their
 internal monitor, and to prostrate themselves be-
 fore their offended Father, to acknowledge their
 wretchedness, and, like the prodigal son, to pray
 to be received again into his family upon the foot-
 ing of his hired servants !—But mark the father’s
 behaviour towards this unhappy young man, as
 represented by Christ ;—“ And he arose and came
 “ to his father : But, when he was yet far off,
 “ his father saw him, and had compassion, and
 “ ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”
 The son then repeated to his father his sense of
 his own wretchedness, and told him he was no
 more worthy to be called his son. “ But the fa-
 “ ther said to his servants, Bring forth the best
 “ robe, and put it on him, and put a ring upon
 “ his

“ his finger, and shoes on his feet : And bring
 “ hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us
 “ eat and be merry ; for this my son was dead,
 “ and is alive again ; he was lost and he is
 “ found.”—Of all the accounts which we have
 received, from philosophers and others, of the
 transcendent goodness, indulgence, and mercy,
 of the Supreme Being, our common Father, none
 can come into competition with this which is now
 before us :—The father, says Christ, when he
 saw the son, even at a distance, coming towards
 him, although he had squandered away all his
 substance, and was reduced to misery, instantly
 forgot all his faults, had compassion, and ran
 towards him to kiss him ; rejected the request
 which he made to be placed upon the footing of
 one of his hired servants ; ordered him to be in-
 vested again with all the prerogatives of his son,
 and to be clothed with all the ornaments of the
 heir of his family ; and even appointed a feast,
 and day of rejoicing, for his family, for this
 happy event :—“ For, says he, there is joy in
 “ heaven, and in the presence of the angels of
 “ God, over one sinner that repenteth.”

Jesus likewise gives us another example of the
 universal benevolence and mercy of God, of
 his receiving the humble and meek, and rejecting
 the proud, arrogant, and self-sufficient, under the
 similitude of the Pharisee and the Publican*.—
 When Christ was reproofing the Pharisees, and

* Luke xviii.

those who trusted in their own wisdom and righteousness, and despised others; by way of example, he said, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican: The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican; I fast twice in the week, and give tythes of all I possess.—But the Publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you," says Christ, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—I have already observed, that the Pharisees were a sect whose opinions were founded upon a part of the Mosaical institution, to which they had given such interpretations as coincided with their own ideas of things, and upon the philosophy of Plato, which they had likewise tortured in the same manner: They had a very high idea of their own wisdom and abilities, and looked with the greatest contempt upon all the rest of mankind, whom they imagined to be less wise than themselves: They kept up some of the Mosaical, as well as of the Platonic, forms of virtue, but seem to have lost all the spirit both of the one and of the other.—The Publican, on the other hand, was a poor wretched sinner, who was

not only sensible of the state of misery in which he was, but that he had nothing to offer up to God in his justification, but a broken and contrite heart; and therefore he threw himself entirely upon his great mercy and goodness: And Christ tells us how much more acceptable his offering was, to the Father of spirits, than that of the other; "For," says he, "he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

In almost every part of the Evangelists, we find Jesus Christ reproving the Pharisees, who set themselves up to dispute with him; and, when they found that all their learning and all their wisdom availed them nothing in his presence, and left them so much below him, that even the common people began to hold them very cheap, although they had before his time been always regarded as the oracles of the Jewish nation, they envied him, and on all occasions strove to contradict, and even to destroy him: For which purpose, one of the first opportunities that offered, was, when they secured the woman who was taken in adultery *, even in the very act, and who, according to the strict law of Moses, should have been immediately stoned to death:—But, knowing the great goodness of Jesus, and his disposition to blunt the edge of justice, by mercy and compassion, they brought her into the temple before him; and, after accusing her of this heinous

* John viii.

crime, and reciting Moses's law thereon, they said unto him, "But, master, what sayest thou?" imagining that they had now laid a snare for him, wherein he must undoubtedly fall; because, if he had contradicted the law of Moses, they would have accused him before the chief priests and the governor; and if he had formally condemned this woman, who was a sinner, they would have pointed out the inconsistency of his conduct to the people, as he had, 'till that time, pardoned all those who came to him, and shewn their superiority over him.—But Jesus, with a presence of mind, and a degree of wisdom and justness, that was not to be paralleled, stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he did not hear them at first; but, when they continued asking him, he lifted himself up, and, as it were in an indifferent manner, or as if he was not in the least embarrassed with their questions, said unto them, "He that is without sin among you, " let him cast the first stone at her." And then he re-assumed his former indifference, and stooping down, wrote again upon the ground as before.—But this was a thunder-stroke to all those who heard it; for, being convicted by their own conscience, they immediately left both the woman and him, that he might pass such a sentence upon her as he thought proper. And when Jesus had lifted himself up again, and saw none but the woman, with his usual goodness, compassion, and godlike benevolence, he said unto her, "Where
 " are

“ are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?” to which she answered, “ No man, Lord.” Then Jesus said unto her, “ Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” Thus the very act with which those self-sufficient Pharisees thought to ensnare and confound Jesus, was turned to their own shame and confusion, and the offender, who was ready to be stoned, was pardoned, by convicting her accusers, and making them tacitly confess, that they were unworthy to be her judges.

Soon after this another example offered, where Christ had an opportunity not only to shew his universal benevolence, mercy, and goodness, but also to explain more particularly the commission which he had received, and which he was to preach unto mankind *.—When he was sat down to meat, in the house of one of the Pharisees, Mary Magdalene, who was a notorious prostitute, as well as a very wicked woman otherwise, hearing that he sat there at meat, came and brought an alabaster box of rich ointment, and stood behind him, in a very humble posture, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, to wipe them with the hairs of her head, to kiss them, and afterwards to anoint them with this rich ointment; shewing thereby the most perfect contrition, and a sincere repentance, for her past conduct. But when the wise and self-sufficient Pharisee, whose guest he then was, saw it, he was scandalized at

* Luke vii.

it, and said within himself, If this man had been a prophet, he would have known who, and what sort of woman, this is, who toucheth him, for she is a notorious prostitute. On the other hand, Jesus, who saw from the Pharisee's looks and behaviour, what his ideas were, said to him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee; and the Pharisee answered, Master, say on.—A certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me then which of them will love him the most? Simon said, I suppose him to whom he forgave most. Jesus, answering, said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged;—and then turning towards Mary, he said, Simon, seest thou this woman? When I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water to wash my feet, but she hath washed them with her tears, wiped them with the hairs of her head, and hath anointed them with ointment. Thou gavest me no kiss, but she hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven her, for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. Then he said again to the woman, Mary, thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.—Under the character of those two debtors, Jesus Christ hath represented the situation of all the human race, with respect to the Supreme Being, their common father. We have all offended, and are become

become debtors to his Almighty justice, some for five hundred pence; and others for fifty. But, as we have nothing to pay, as we have nothing to plead in our behalf, he declares that he is ready to forgive us all our debts, provided that we will acknowledge them, and humbly implore his Almighty forgiveness; and shew that same compassion to our fellow-creatures that he hath shewn unto us: For, says he, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.—But, that no person should mistake his doctrine, particularly this principal part of it, which we are now examining, we find Jesus expressing himself in the strongest terms upon this head, in another place*.—When Peter came to him, and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee till seven times, but until seventy times seven.” Therefore, said he, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, who would bring his servants to an account; and when one was brought him, who owed him ten thousand talents, and had nothing to make good his payment, his Lord ordered him to be sold with his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. However, when the servant fell down before him, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all, his Lord was moved with compassion, set him at liberty, and forgave him the debt.—

* Matthew xviii.

But,

But, notwithstanding this servant had received so much mercy and compassion from his Lord, he would not forgive one of his fellow-servants, who owed him only one hundred pence, although the latter fell at his feet, and begged him to have patience with him, and he would pay him the whole, but cast him into prison till he should pay the debt.—Whereupon the Lord, when he heard of it, called this servant to him, and said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; Shouldst not thou also have had compassion upon thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due to him.—“So likewise,” says Christ, “shall my heavenly Father do also to you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

The examples of which I have here taken notice, are sufficient to explain this fundamental part of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which points out the situation that we are in, with respect to the Father of spirits.—We may learn from hence, that we have all offended him, and, if his Almighty justice alone was to take place, are liable to be delivered over to the tormentors; but that, if we will humbly pray for mercy, and acknowledge our faults, we shall be freely forgiven, let our debts be ever so great;—but our pardon will be granted only on this condition, that we equally forgive all our fellow-creatures who have offended us.—

No other preacher, or lawgiver, has ever given us such a plain and clear account of the transcendent mercy and goodness of the Supreme Being, or of his universal bounty and justice towards mankind. All that Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and the principal of the ancient philosophers, taught their followers, or wrote upon this head, is so full of obscurity and confusion, that nothing certain is to be gathered therefrom. The voice of nature teaches us, that an Omnipotent Being, who has created us, and who is our Almighty Protector, should be just and benevolent; but even this faithful guide never taught us the boundless mercy and goodness which, as we learn from the doctrine of Jesus Christ, he is always ready to shew even to his disobedient children, whenever they come to have a sense of their bad conduct, and, like the Prodigal Son, return again, and throw themselves at the feet of their offended Father.

Again, we are told, in another place *, that a certain lawyer came to Christ, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? to which Jesus answered, What is written in the Law? How readest thou? The lawyer, answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. Jesus said unto him, Thou hast rightly answered; this do, and thou

* Luke xviii.

shalt

thalt live. But the lawyer, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus; And who is my neighbour? And Jesus, answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stript him of his raiment, wounded him, and left him half dead. And by chance there came a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. A Levite likewise came by that way, looked on him, and followed the example of the priest. But a certain Samaritan, a stranger, being on his journey, came by where he was, and, when he saw him, he had compassion on him, bound up his wounds, set him upon his own beast, carried him to the inn, and took all the care possible of him. Now, says Christ to the lawyer, which of these three thinkest thou was the neighbour unto him who fell among the thieves? To which the latter answered, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus, Go and do thou likewise.—We see here a very just reproof for those who imagine that their having the knowledge only of the laws, and of the commandments of God, and keeping up a shew of godliness, is sufficient to save them, and to set them above the rest of mankind, without entering into the spirit of it, or employing those talents which the Supreme Being has given them, for the use and benefit of their fellow-creatures.—But, that no person should plead ignorance of this important point, Jesus Christ hath fully explained it, and its consequences; by likening the kingdom

dom

dom of heaven unto a man who was about to travel into a far country*, and when he had called his own servants, he delivered unto them his goods. Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several abilities; and then took his journey. Whereupon he who had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and gained other five talents; and likewise he who had received the two, gained also other two. But he who had received the one talent went and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money. After a long time the Lord of those servants returned, and reckoned with them; when he that had received the five talents came and shewed his Lord other five talents that he had gained by them, and received his Lord's approbation, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He likewise who had received the two talents came and received the same joyful welcome. But he who had received the one talent came, and said, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not sowed." And, through fear, I went and hid thy money in the earth, that thou mightest receive what is thine. But his Lord answered, and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, if thou hadst known my character to have been such, as thou hast described it,

* Matthew xxv.

thou

thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, that when I came, I might have received the same with interest.—The Lord then ordered that the talent should be taken from him, and given to another who had ten talents: “For
 “ unto every one that hath shall be given, and
 “ he shall have abundance; but from him that
 “ hath not shall be taken away even that which
 “ he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant
 “ into outer darkness; there shall be weeping
 “ and gnashing of teeth.”

From the description which Jesus Christ has given of the last judgment, we have also a particular account of the strict justice, as well as infinite mercy and goodness, which the Supreme Being will shew towards all the human race; and that the least act of humanity and goodness, which we shew to our fellow-creatures, will be rewarded as if it was done to God himself.—When the Son of Man, says Christ, shall come in his glory, surrounded with angels, and shall be seated upon his throne of glory, and the inhabitants of the whole earth shall be gathered before him; then shall he separate them, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall place the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left; saying to those on his right hand, “Come, ye blessed of
 “ my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for
 “ you from the foundation of the world: For I
 “ was hungry, and ye gave me meat; thirsty,
 “ and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and
 “ ye

“ ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I
 “ was sick, and ye visited me ; and when I was
 “ in prison, ye came unto me.”—Then shall the
 righteous say unto him, Lord, when saw we thee
 in either of those situations, and gave thee the
 succours which thou hast described ? And the
 Great Judge shall answer, “ Verily I say unto
 “ you, inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the
 “ least of my brethren, your fellow-creatures, ye
 “ have done it unto me.”—Afterwards the Judge
 shall say to those on his left hand, “ Depart from
 “ me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared
 “ for the devil and his angels ;” for when I was
 hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and in
 prison, ye had no compassion upon me. They
 shall likewise answer him in like manner as the
 righteous had done ; When saw we thee in either
 of those situations, and did not minister unto
 thee ? to which he shall answer them, saying,
 Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not
 to the least of my servants, your fellow-creatures,
 ye did it not unto me.

Another part of the doctrine of Jesus Christ,
 which he describes to be equally essential with the
 foregoing, is the particular caution which he has
 given his followers, to avoid being ensnared by
 the riches and cares of this world. For, says
 Christ, where a man’s treasure is, there will his
 heart be also.—In the parable of the sower, he
 hath, under the similitude of the seed which fell
 among thorns, shewn how much the cares of this
 world,

world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word of God, in those who have received it, and maketh it become unfruitful. But, lest this should not have been sufficiently explained, he has given us two striking examples, so clear and expressive in themselves, that a person of the meanest capacity cannot fail to comprehend their meaning and utility.—When one of his followers desired Jesus to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him*, he immediately answered him, with some quickness (indeed we always find him endeavouring to avoid giving any answer to questions appertaining to civil government, or to the affairs of this world, as to things in which he had not any concern) “Man, who made me a judge, or a divider, “over you.” And after cautioning his followers to beware of covetousness, he spoke a parable unto them, saying, “The land of a certain rich “man brought forth plentifully, and he thought “within himself, what he should do with all his “fruits, as he had not room wherein he could “bestow them : And he said within himself, this “I will do ; I will pull down my barns, and “build greater ; and will there bestow all my “fruits, and my goods. And I will say to my “soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for “many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and “be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, “this night thy soul shall be required of thee :

• Luke xii.

“ then

“ then whose shall those things be which thou
 “ hast provided ? This is the state of the man
 “ who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not
 “ rich towards God.” Then Jesus, turning to-
 wards his disciples, said unto them, “ Take no
 “ thought for what ye shall eat, nor for what ye
 “ shall put on (for after these things do the nations
 “ of the world seek) as your heavenly Father
 “ knoweth that ye have need of them ; but seek
 “ ye rather the kingdom of God, and all these
 “ things shall be added unto you,” as the neces-
 saries of life, which are all that can be properly
 possessed in this world.—Again, we are told that,
 when “ Jesus was passing on his way with his dis-
 “ ciples *, a certain young man came on run-
 “ ning, and kneeling down to him, asked him,
 “ Good Master, what shall I do that I may in-
 “ herit eternal life ?” Jesus answering him, said,
 Thou knowest the commandments, keep them
 strictly : And the young man answered, Master, I
 have observed them all from my youth. Jesus
 hearing this reply from a Jew, that he had kept
 Moses’s law, but thought that he wanted some-
 thing more, to qualify him for eternal salvation ;
 and seeing, from the posture which he was in,
 that he was sincerely disposed, and that he was
 led thereto from a strong impulse of nature ; I
 say, “ Jesus beholding him, loved him,” and said
 unto him, with his usual goodness and benevo-
 lence, “ One thing thou lackest : go thy way, sell

• Mark x.

L

“ whatever

“ whatever thou hast, and give to the poor; and
 “ come, take up the cross, and follow me.”—
 This was a thunder-stroke to the young man,
 who, although he was apparently naturally dis-
 posed to good, was not yet prepared for such rigid
 discipline.—If Jesus Christ had ordered him some-
 thing less trying, there is the greatest appearance
 that he would have obeyed his orders; but to quit
 the pleasures of this world, and all his riches, and
 to join a company who were at that time despised
 and persecuted by all the principal persons of
 the Jewish nation, was a course of life for which
 he was not altogether prepared. He was very
 desirous of having a true prospect of eternal
 life; but, at the same time, he would also enjoy
 the riches and pleasures of this life:—“ And he
 “ was sad at that saying, and went away grieved,
 “ for he had large possessions.”—Whereupon
 Jesus, turning towards his disciples, said, “ How
 “ hardly shall they who have riches enter into the
 “ kingdom of God!” And, when his disciples
 expressed some surprise at these words, he ex-
 plained himself again, and said unto them, “ How
 “ hard is it for them who trust in riches to enter
 “ into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel
 “ to go through the eye of a needle, than for a
 “ rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

Jesus Christ hath fully explained the difference
 between a man who, putting his whole trust in
 his riches, neglects the duty which he owes to his
 God and to his fellow-creatures (whose character
 will

will more particularly appear in the following example) and another who is possessed of the goods of this world, and who, after he has supplied himself and his family with the necessaries of life, applies the remaining part of his revenue in acts of humanity and benevolence, for the benefit of his fellow-creatures who are poor, and who want his assistance; together with the dreadful situation into which the former will be plunged in another world.—“There was a certain rich man,” says he, “who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who laid at his gate full of sores; and he desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: and moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”—We see here a clear description of the rich man whom Jesus hath before observed: he is clothed, and fed, with all the luxuries of life; he is a perfect Epicure, but is lost to all sense of humanity, and the divine Providence hath bestowed her blessings upon him to no purpose. He sees a fellow-creature lying at his gate, in the greatest distress and misery, and praying for some relief; not that he thereby desires to diminish, in the least, the luxury and extravagance of the rich man, but to receive only the crumbs which fell from his table, and which he gave to nourish his dogs;—but this inhuman glutton rejected his prayer, and regarded him with that unfeelingness to which the dogs were unaccustomed; for these

dumb animals, seeing a thing that had animal life in such a wretched situation, came and licked his sores, from an instinct peculiar to their species, and shewed at least a desire to do him all the service that they were in a situation to do him.—And when oppressed nature was exhausted, the soul of the poor beggar was delivered out of misery, and carried by angels into Abraham's bosom :—" The
 " rich man died also, and was buried ; and in
 " hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment, and
 " saw Abraham afar off, with Lazarus in his bo-
 " som ; and he cried, and said, Father Abraham,
 " have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he
 " may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool
 " my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."
 But alas! that mercy which he had refused to shew when on earth, the time of his probation, was now refused to him : " For Abraham said, Son, remem-
 " ber that thou, in thy lifetime, hast received thy
 " good things, and Lazarus his evil things ; but
 " now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.
 " And moreover between us and you, there is a
 " great gulph fixed, so that they who would pass
 " from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass
 " to us that would come from thence."—Jesus
 Christ has clearly shewn us from hence, that there is no repentance in the grave ; and that as death leaves us, judgment will find us.—But to illustrate still more this important part of Christ's doctrine, we shall find it more particularly explained in the discourse which he had with Nicodemus, where he
 lays

lays open the necessity of regeneration towards attaining eternal salvation; a point which none of the Israelitish prophets or lawgivers had ever touched upon before, and which, apparently, was never a part of the ideas of the ancient philosophers.

Nicodemus, we are told, was one of the sect of the Pharisees, a man of considerable note, and a ruler of the Jewish nation: it appears also, that, like the young man before mentioned, he was well disposed, and wished to be instructed in the right way to salvation: but as Jesus Christ and his doctrine were at that time held in the greatest contempt by his sect, and by the chief persons of this nation, he had not resolution enough to support all the mockery and persecution which he foresaw would be the consequence of his taking up his cross and following him, or even of his being openly seen with him, although it is clear that he was convinced, that Jesus Christ was either the Messias, or some other great prophet:—And therefore, “he came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him*.” But Jesus, who apparently knew the man’s thoughts, and his desire to inherit eternal salvation, but at the same time, to pass smoothly through life, and to avoid exposing himself to the same persecution, to which his followers were exposed, put him immediately to the test, and said unto

* John iii.

him, " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a
 " man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom
 " of God."—Surprised at this new doctrine, " Ni-
 " codemus saith unto him, How can a man be
 " born when he is old? Can he enter the second
 " time into his mother's womb and be born?"
 To which Jesus answered, explaining himself in
 a still clearer manner, " Verily, verily, I say unto
 " thee, except a man be born of water and of the
 " Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of
 " God: that which is born of the flesh, is flesh,
 " but that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit."
 —But lest any of my readers should be at a loss
 to comprehend what Jesus Christ means particu-
 larly by being born of water and of the Spirit, I
 will beg leave humbly to offer my opinion upon
 this matter; which is, that except a man, after the
 baptism of water, repents sincerely of his former of-
 fences, and, through the merits and intercession of
 Jesus Christ, is pardoned before God during the
 time of his probation; except that even the secret
 thoughts of his heart are cleansed, by the inspira-
 tion of the Holy Spirit, and that he walks in the
 regeneration of life, pure in heart, and innocent
 like a little child, with respect to evil designs, he
 cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—After-
 wards Jesus opened himself still more to Nicodemus,
 and attempted to convince him, that he was the
 Christ, the Son of God; and that he must be the sa-
 crifice before God for the sins of the whole world;
 " For," says he, " as Moses lifted up the serpent
 " in

“ in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be
 “ lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should
 “ not perish but have everlasting life. For God
 “ so loved the world, that he gave his only begot-
 “ ten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should
 “ not perish, but have everlasting life: for God
 “ sent not his Son into the world to condemn the
 “ world, but that the world through him might
 “ be saved. He that believeth on him is not
 “ condemned; but he that believeth not is already
 “ condemned, because he hath not believed in the
 “ name of the only begotten Son of God: And
 “ this is the condemnation, that light is come in-
 “ to the world, and men loved darkness rather
 “ than light, because their deeds were evil.”—

The latter part of the discourse with Nicodemus
 is sufficiently clear, and wants no explanation;
 but we do not find that, notwithstanding all that
 Jesus said, this Pharisee was sufficiently converted to
 follow him in the regeneration of life; although it
 appears, that he had afterwards resolution enough
 to attempt to stem the torrent of abuse that they
 were pouring forth against Jesus in their council.—

“ Doth our law,” says he, “judge any man before
 “ it hear him, and know what he doeth *?”

When Jesus began to preach, and to do his great
 miracles among the people, he did not openly
 avow that he was the Messiah and Son of God;
 but seemed rather to have desired that men would
 judge of him from his works and from his doc-

* John vii. 51.

trine, than from his own assertions: he even frequently charged his disciples, that they should not tell any man that he was the Christ, till after a certain time; and that it would be much more agreeable to him, if men would freely form their private judgment of his merits from what they saw and heard of him.—When he told the woman of Samaria, that * “God is a Spirit; and they that
 “ worship him, must worship him in spirit and
 “ in truth; the woman saith unto him, I know
 “ that Messias cometh, which is called Christ;
 “ when he is come, he will tell us all things.” We see from hence, that the Messias was expected also by the Samaritans, who had no communication with the Jews. And when Jesus saw that the woman seemed to place a confidence in him, that he would tell her all things, he said unto her, “ I
 “ that speak unto thee am he.”—But he judged otherwise with respect to the chief priests, and the elders of the people of the Jews, who came formally in a body to him, when he was preaching in the temple, and said, “ By what authority doest
 “ thou these things? and who gave thee this au-
 “ thority + ?”—But Jesus, who knew what their secret intentions were, did not choose to give them a direct answer, but rather to turn their malice upon themselves; and therefore he said unto them,
 “ I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell
 “ me, I in like wise will tell you by what autho-
 “ rity I do these things. The baptism of John

* John iv.

† Matt xxi.

“ was

“ was it from heaven, or of men ? ” — This was a question which they did not in the least expect ; and which, in a great measure, frustrated their designs ; for, on reasoning with themselves, they said, “ If “ we shall say, From heaven, he will say unto us, “ Why did ye not then believe him ? but if we “ shall say, Of men, we fear the people ; for all hold “ John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus “ and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto “ them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do “ these things. ” — Never were people so disconcerted in their wicked intentions as those Jews were in the case before us ; they came, in great formality, to demand of Jesus Christ, by what authority he did the great miracles which he was doing daily among them, with an intent, as it afterwards appeared, if he had avowed his authority, and confessed himself to be the Christ, to put him to death. But Jesus, whose wisdom was equal to his goodness, not only out of their own mouth defeated all their wicked designs, by shewing them that they were more ignorant and malicious, than the publicans whom they despised, but also gave them such a just reprimand before all the people, that from that day forward they took every opportunity to murder him. However, seeing the disorder and confusion they were in, he began to reason with them, and, under the form of parables, pointed out their wickedness and malicious designs.

A cer.

A certain man, said he, had two sons, and coming to the first, he said, Son, go and work to-day in my vineyard; but the son answered, I will not go: however he afterwards repented and went. And, coming to the second, he said the same thing; to which the latter answered, I go, Sir, but went not. Now, said Jesus to the chief priests and Pharisees, which of these two, think ye, did the will of his Father? They said unto him, The first. To which Jesus replied, "Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: But the publicans and harlots believed him. And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards that ye might believe him."—Moreover, said he, I will tell you another parable. There was a certain lord who planted a vineyard, fenced it round, made a wine-press in it, built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen; and then went into a far country. And, when the season approached, he sent his servants to those husbandmen to receive the fruits of it: But the husbandmen ill-treated his servants, beating one, killing another, and stoning a third. The lord sent again other servants more than the first, but they served them in the same manner. Whereupon he at length sent his son to them, saying, they will undoubtedly reverence my son: But when the husbandmen saw him, they said among themselves, This is the heir, we will kill him, and seize

seize upon his inheritance : Which wicked thought they immediately carried into execution. Therefore, said Jesus, when the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? —To which they answered, by passing judgment upon themselves, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and let out their vineyard to others, who will render him the fruits in due season. Then said Jesus to them, “ Therefore I say unto you, “ the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, “ and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits “ thereof.”—Jesus moreover asked them, “ Did ye “ never read in the scriptures, that the stone “ which the builders rejected, the same is become “ the head of the corner? This is the Lord’s “ doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes : And “ whosoever shall fall on **this** stone shall be “ broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it “ will grind him to powder.”—The chief priests and Pharisees, now perceiving that he was declaring the situation they were in, by his parables, endeavoured to take him, and put him to death ; but they were afraid of the people, who generally regarded him as a prophet.

Jesus then proceeded to describe his situation, with respect to the Jewish nation, in other parables* ;—And compared the kingdom of heaven unto a certain king who made a marriage for his son ; when he sent forth his servants to call all those who were bidden to the wedding ; but they

* Matthew xxii.

would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell all those who are bidden that every thing is prepared and ready, and desire that they will come to the marriage. But those wicked people made light of it, one going to his farm, and another to his merchandize; and the rest ill-treated his servants and slew them. However, when the king was informed thereof, he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city: And then said unto his servants, The wedding is ready, but those who were bidden were not worthy. Jesus would from hence infer, that the servants of God were first sent unto the Jewish nation, who refused to obey their dictates, ill-treated some, and destroyed others; because of their hardened wickedness; but that their own destruction would be the consequence. —And therefore the king afterwards said unto his servants, “ Go ye into the highways, and as many
 “ as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those
 “ servants went out into the highways, and gathered
 “ together all, as many as they found, both bad
 “ and good; and the wedding was furnished with
 “ guests.” Or in other words, Go ye among the Gentiles, and proclaim the joyful news, that the wedding is ready; and that all are invited to come to the marriage-feast, and to enter into the joys of their Lord. —But now see the consequence:
 “ And when the king came in to see the guests,
 “ he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend,
 “ how

“ how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.”—By the wedding garment, Jesus Christ here means the robe of righteousness wherewith every person, who would enter into the kingdom of heaven, and be a partaker of the marriage-feast of the Son of God, should be clothed: Because, as Jesus has said, in another place, it is not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, who shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven; he that hath put off the old defiled garments of sin and corruption, and hath clothed himself in the white raiment of the Son of God; and he who hath put off the old man with his deeds, and walks purely in the regeneration of life.—“ Then said the king to the servants, Bind him, who hath not a wedding garment, hand and foot, and take him away into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth: For many are called, but few are chosen.” Many are called to be partakers of the kingdom of God, but there are few who prepare and make themselves worthy to be received into those celestial habitations.

Jesus Christ hath developed another very important point of his doctrine, under the parable of the labourers in the vineyard.*—“ The kingdom of heaven,” says he, “ is like unto a man who is a householder, and went out early in the

* Matthew xx.

‘ morn-

“ morning, to hire labourers into his vineyard.” With whom he agreed for a penny a day, and sent them into his vineyard to work: And went out again about the third hour, and saw others idle in the market-place, to whom he said, Go ye also into the vineyard to labour, and you shall receive what is right: And they went their way. And again, about the sixth hour, and about the ninth hour, he went out, and did the same. And, as late as the eleventh hour, he went out, and finding others idle, he said unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They answered, Because no man hath hired us. Then said he, Go ye into my vineyard and labour, and whatever is right, that shall ye receive.—So when the evening was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And those who were hired at the eleventh hour received every man a penny; but when they came who were hired early in the morning, they expected to have received more; but they likewise received every man a penny. Whereupon they murmured against the lord of the vineyard, saying, These last, who have worked but one hour, thou hast made equal unto us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day. But the lord answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong, didst not thou agree with me for a penny? take thy wages, and go thy way; for, as it is lawful for me to do what I shall think proper with my own, I will give unto

unto this last the same as I gave unto thee.— Under this figurative description of the labourers in the vineyard, Jesus Christ hath pointed out the situation of all mankind, with respect to their heavenly Father. Before we are called to participate of his heavenly bounty, we are all in a state of idleness, and spend our precious time in doing those things from which we cannot receive any manner of advantage or profit, although our eternal happiness and welfare depend upon our labouring, as Christ hath before mentioned; and for which we shall not fail to receive our just hire. Happy are those who are called early in the morning to work out their salvation! but they ought not to murmur because their great Creator has made their fellow-creatures equal to them, although they were not called till late in the day; perhaps they had not an opportunity: On the contrary, they ought rather to admire his infinite mercy and goodness, for receiving their brethren so late in the day; and, because they shewed a desire to serve him, for rewarding them equally with themselves. But thrice happy are they, who, after having spent their time in idleness, or in doing that which profiteth not, in the evening of life, and when their idle conduct has reduced them to a state of poverty towards God, and who are naked, miserable, poor, and maimed, are called to labour in the vineyard, by so good and merciful a master, who, for serving him faithfully only one hour, will clothe them with the robes of righteousness,

teousness, and make them equally partakers of his eternal bounty !

Under the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus Christ hath likewise set forth another part of his doctrine, which we should always have in our memory ; because we may from hence discover the dreadful consequences which may follow from our not being always ready to obey the calls of our heavenly Father, and to partake of the marriage feast, with the blessed, in the mansions above. “ The kingdom of heaven,” says he, “ shall be
 “ likened unto ten virgins,* which took their
 “ lamps, and went forth to meet the bride-
 “ groom ; and five of them were wise, and five
 “ were foolish. And they that were foolish took
 “ their lamps, and took no oil in them : But the
 “ wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
 “ While the bridegroom tarried, they all slum-
 “ bered and slept ; but at midnight there was a
 “ great cry made, Behold, the bridegroom com-
 “ eth ; go ye out to meet him. Then all those
 “ virgins arose and trimmed their lamps ; and the
 “ foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil,
 “ for our lamps are gone out. But the wise an-
 “ swered, saying, Not so ; lest there be not enough
 “ for us and you ; but go ye rather to them that
 “ sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they
 “ went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they
 “ that were ready went in with him to the mar-
 “ riage ; and the door was shut. Afterwards came

* Matthew xxv.

“ also

“ also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord,
 “ open to us. But he answered and said, Verily
 “ I say unto you, I know you not. Watch
 “ therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor
 “ the hour, when the Son of Man cometh.”—

Jesus Christ hath given a most excellent lesson to all those who wish to inherit eternal life, and to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb; and has shewn them the fatal effects of delaying the preparatives necessary for conducting them, at all times, into this heavenly banquet.—Under this parable of the virgins, he hath likewise pointed out the state of all mankind, with respect to their heavenly Father. By the wise virgins, he means those who are always prepared to meet their Lord, not only when he calls them to follow him, in the state of regeneration, but even when he summons their immortal part to quit its earthly habitation, they are always ready to obey him; and regard the instrument which he has employed for that purpose with a smile of contentment, saying, Thou art death, but thou hast lost thy sting. By the oil which those virgins took in their lamps is meant the faith in the merits of the Son of God, which is represented as absolutely necessary to enter into the marriage feast. Under the character of the foolish virgins is set forth the state of those, who although their lamps are trimmed, and they express a desire to be partakers of this joyful event, have neglected to provide themselves with the essential part, the

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oil;

oil; but finding, as the bridegroom, or the Son of God, came at midnight, and called them to the marriage, that this ingredient was necessary to give them light, and to conduct them through the darkness of the shadow of death, and that they were refused it by the others, they then attempted to buy for themselves; but, alas! it was too late; death came and stopped them in their career: the door was shut before they came again: And when they cried, Lord, Lord, open to us, they were answered, I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.

We find that Jesus was not desirous of having it publicly known that he was the Christ, for some time after he shewed himself to the world; and that he never praised or exalted himself before his enemies, but always was pleased that his works should shew him to be the Messias: And moreover he constantly admonished his disciples to be humble, and never to exalt, or to take any state upon themselves: for, when they asked him, “ Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? ” he called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them; and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye shall be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven*?”—But this humility was so disagreeable to the proud

* Matthew xviii.

chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, that they were firmly persuaded their Christ would never come in such a humble state : and, therefore, notwithstanding Jesus was daily doing such mighty works among them, as making the blind immediately to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, cleansing the lepers, casting out devils, raising the dead, curing all manner of diseases among the people, and preaching such pure and heavenly doctrine as never was preached before in the world; I say, notwithstanding Jesus was daily doing all these things, they rejected him, and said, that he cast out devils, i. e. that he healed the lunatics, and those who were disordered in their senses, by the power of Beelzebub the prince of devils. But Jesus, mildly rebuking them, said, “ If a kingdom, city, or a house, be divided against itself, “ it cannot stand : and if Satan cast out Satan, he “ is divided against himself, and his kingdom “ cannot stand. But if I, by the Spirit of God, “ cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God “ come among you; or else how can one enter “ into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, “ except he first bind the strong man? and then “ he will spoil his house*.”

Moreover those self-sufficient Pharisees were scandalized at Jesus, because he did his cures on the Sabbath-day ; as the form of some of the Moisaic rites, and of Plato’s doctrines, was all the religion which those hypocritical people had, and if they had omitted these formalities, all the world

* Matthew xii.

would soon perceive that they were ten times worse than the publicans, whom they were despising. But Jesus, when the man who had his hand withered stood before him, and the Pharisees were asking him, whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? that they might accuse him, said unto them, "What man shall there be among you who shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days. Then he said unto the man whose hand was withered, Stretch forth thine hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was immediately restored whole like the other."—But the Scribes and Pharisees thought this such a capital crime, that they immediately went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

They were no less offended with him for having cured a man, who was born blind, on the Sabbath-day*; but, from reading the description of this case, which is very clearly set forth by St. John, we shall be able to form some idea of the unaccountable conduct of those people. When this man was brought before the Pharisees, they first asked him, how he had received his sight? to which he answered, that Jesus had made clay and put it upon his eyes, and ordered him to wash, and he received his sight. "Then said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day: Others said, How

* John ix.

“ can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?
 “ And there was a division among them.” But many of them would not believe that he had been blind, and received his sight, till they had been fully informed of it by his parents, and were convinced of the fact. Then they called the man again, who had been blind, and said unto him, “ Give God the praise, for we know “ that this man is a sinner.” To which the man answered, “ Whether he is a sinner, or no, I know “ not. One thing I know, that whereas I was “ blind, now I see.” Whereupon, finding the man had a good opinion of Jesus, they ordered him to tell them again what Jesus did to him, when he opened his eyes; to which he answered, “ I have “ told you already, and ye did not hear; where- “ fore would ye hear it again? will ye also be “ his disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, “ Thou art his disciple, we are Moses’s disciples: “ we know that God spake unto Moses; but for “ this fellow we know not from whence he is.” To which the poor man very justly answered; “ Why, it is very marvellous indeed, that ye know “ not from whence he is, and he hath opened “ mine eyes; for we know that God heareth not “ sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of “ God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since “ the world began, it has not been heard that any “ man opened the eyes of one who was born “ blind: if this man was not of God, he could “ do nothing.” To this they answered, “ Thou “ wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach

“ us?” And they not only excommunicated the man out of their synagogue, but they endeavoured to destroy Jesus, for doing this miraculous act. And if we may judge from the rest of their conduct, if they could, with any degree of propriety, have persuaded the people that this miracle was done also by the power of the devil, they would undoubtedly have done it.

But the Jews were still more offended at Jesus Christ, for curing the lame man, who lay many years by the pool of Bethesda *; and particularly because he had ordered the man to take up his bed and walk; as this cure was also done on the Sabbath-day, and, according to their customs, it was not lawful for him to carry his bed on this day. But the poor man, rejoiced at the great blessing which he had received, and not knowing who it was that had cured him, answered them, “ He that made me whole, ordered me to take “ up my bed and walk.” Afterwards when the Jews learnt that it was Jesus who had done this great miracle, they sought to destroy him, because he had, as they imagined, broken their Sabbath. Whereupon Jesus, answering them, began to avow publicly his being the Messias; and said, “ My Father worketh hitherto, and I “ work.” This exasperated the Jews still more against him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but also said that God was his Father.— Jesus afterwards declared himself, before the whole multitude who had eat of his loaves and fishes,

* John v.

to be the bread of life, which came down from heaven*; and, says he, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst: For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."—Then many of the Jews, who followed him, murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. "And they said, Is not this the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then he saith, I came down from heaven?—But Jesus, to prepare them still more for what was to follow, said unto them, "Murmur not among yourselves," for I tell you again, that, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead: this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."—Surprised at this doctrine, and not knowing that Jesus was speaking to them of the Spirit, and of the Word which was made flesh, the Jews said among themselves, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? to which Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will

* John vi.

M 4

"raise

“ raise him up at the last day. He that eateth my
 “ flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and
 “ I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and
 “ I live by the Father ; so he that eateth me, even
 “ he shall live by me.”—Jesus having explained
 himself in this figurative manner, many of the
 Jews, who, from seeing his miracles, and hearing
 his doctrine of pure morality, had a good opinion
 of him, were highly offended at him ; and even
 many of his disciples went back and walked no
 more with him : whereupon Jesus, turning himself
 to the rest, whom he perceived were likewise mur-
 muring, said unto them, “ Doth this offend
 “ you? What and if ye shall see the Son of
 “ man ascend up where he was before? It
 “ is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profit-
 “ eth nothing; the words that I speak unto
 “ you, they are spirit, and they are life.”—Al-
 though Jesus had now fully explained himself, and
 shewed his disciples that he was speaking of the
 spirit, and not of his temporal body, others of his
 followers, even his kinsmen, walked no more with
 him for some time, for this was a new doctrine to
 them. “ Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye
 “ also go away? And Simon Peter answered him,
 “ Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the
 “ words of eternal life; and we believe, and are
 “ sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the
 “ living God.”

From this time forward, the Jews took every
 opportunity to counteract Jesus, and to destroy
 him; but the feast of the tabernacles happening
 soon

soon after, he went up boldly into the temple, and taught the people, with such an authority, and with such a persuasive eloquence, that all men were amazed at it; some saying "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned*?"—Others "said, Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But lo he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed, that this is the very Christ?" Whereupon several of the Jews endeavoured to take him, but they were afraid of the multitude, who were astonished at the force of his doctrine; and many believed on him, "saying, When Christ cometh will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"—When the chief priests and Pharisees heard that all the people were much disposed to believe on him, they sent their officers in form to take him: But, when the officers had heard him, they returned to the council, and said, We have not brought him; "for never man spoke like this man."—To which the Pharisees answered, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the Pharisees, or of the rulers, believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed."

History does not furnish us with a sect whose character, in all its parts, was so inconceivably obstinate, self-sufficient, dogmatical, and overbearing, as was that of the Pharisees:—it was a composition of pride, hypocrisy, and ignorance: I say of ignorance; because, although they pre-

* John vii.

tended to be learned, they would never suffer themselves to be guided by their reason; but were always the victims of their self-sufficiency, pride, and envy. When they saw a man before them, who was doing such a number of mighty works, as were never before done since the world began, and which, as they were often obliged to confess, at least tacitly, could not be done by any other power, but by the immediate interposition of the Divinity, they rejected him, because he sometimes lived in Galilee; and attempted to destroy him, because he did some of those mighty cures on the Sabbath-day; although, if either of them had had a son, or a daughter, sick, he would not have scrupled, with all his formality, to have sent for a physician to cure him on this day.—They claimed the liberty of judging for themselves, in things of this moment; and, had they suffered themselves to be governed by their reason, they would, so far at least, have acted as rational creatures. But they cursed the people, who perhaps were more discerning than themselves, because they claimed the same prerogative.—When Nicodemus, who was then of their council, told them, that their law did not judge any man before it heard him, and knew what he did, they answered, and said unto him, “Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.”

Afterwards, when Jesus taught them again in the temple, he said unto them, “When ye shall

“ have lifted up the Son of Man, then ye shall
 “ know that I am he, and that I do nothing of
 “ myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I
 “ speak these things; and he that sent me is with
 “ me; for I do always those things that please
 “ him*.”—And, when several of the Jews believed
 on him, in consequence of these words, he said
 unto them, “ If ye continue in my word, then ye
 “ are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the
 “ truth, and the truth shall make you free.
 “ They said unto him, We are Abraham’s children,
 “ and we were never in bondage to any man:
 “ how sayest thou, ye shall be made free? Jesus,
 “ answering, said, Whosoever committeth sin is
 “ the servant of sin: and the servant abideth not
 “ in the house for ever: but the Son abideth
 “ ever. If therefore the Son shall make you free,
 “ ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are
 “ Abraham’s children: but ye seek to kill me,
 “ because my word hath no place in you. Which
 “ of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the
 “ truth, why do ye not believe me? Verily, ve-
 “ rily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying,
 “ he shall never see death.”—These sayings ap-
 peared to be so very extraordinary, and even
 blasphemous, unto the Jews, who did not perceive
 that Jesus was speaking to them of the spiritual
 death, that they said unto him, “ Thou hast a
 “ devil, and afterwards took up stones to stone

* John viii.

“ him;”

“ him;” but, although he passed by through the midst of them, and went out of the temple, they saw such an air of innocence and goodness about him, that no man had resolution enough to throw a stone at him. And when he came among them again, he re-assumed his former discourse; by telling them *, that he was the door, whereby all those who would be saved were to enter in; and that he was the good shepherd, who would lay down his life for the sheep. “ Therefore,” said he, “ doth my Father love me, because I lay down “ my life, that I might take it again: the power “ to do this I have received of the Father.”

These sayings occasioned again a great division among the Jews; many of whom said, as not understanding what Jesus meant, “ He hath a “ devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? But “ others said, These are not the words of him that “ hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the “ blind?”—Whereupon a great number of the Jews came about him, and said, “ How long dost “ thou make us doubt? If thou art the Christ, “ tell us plainly.” Jesus, answering them, said, I have already told you, and ye believed me not. “ The works that I do in my Father’s name, “ they bear witness of me.” “ I and my Father “ are one.”—Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him; but Jesus said unto them, I have shewn you many good works from my Father;

* John x.

for which of these works do ye stone me? They said, We do not stone thee for any good work, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself the Son of God. To which Jesus answered, It is written in your law, that those unto whom the word of God came, are Gods; and the scripture cannot be broken. "And do you say of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe me not, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." Whereupon the Jews attempted again to take him, but he escaped from among them; and appeared no more openly at Jerusalem, till after he had raised Lazarus from the dead.—But this was an act of such an extraordinary nature, and so well attested, even by the enemies of Jesus, that the chief priests and Pharisees were extremely alarmed at it; and, holding a council, in consequence thereof, said among themselves, "What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." Therefore, by the counsel of Caiaphas, they resolved that Jesus should be put to death, to save their nation from destruction; and also poor Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead; because of him great numbers

numbers of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus*.

No reasonable man can reflect upon the conduct of those Jews without being filled with horror and amazement: they resolved to destroy an innocent person, because he had raised a man from the dead. Of the fact they were well convinced, because several of their friends were eye-witnesses of it; and they must likewise have been well assured, that he could not have done this miracle, but by the immediate interposition of the Divinity. They attempted also to destroy Lazarus, because he was so happy as to be the subject whereon this great miracle was performed. We read of the character of Nero, of Caligula, of Bajazet, and of many other tyrants, with detestation; but these tyrants were innocents in comparison with the chief priests and Pharisees of those days. The former would not have had the courage to have degraded human nature so much, as to do an act of this kind, to which nothing but the determined obstinacy, depravity, and hypocrisy of a Jew was equal.—However, from this time forward, Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews; but gave his disciples a particular account of all that should happen afterwards to Jerusalem, and of the entire destruction of the Jewish nation and government; with all the great signs, and scenes of distress, that would attend it. He had frequently, before this time, told his disciples that he should suffer death,

* John xi, xii.

by the Jews; but now he told them plainly, that for this reason he came into the world, to be the sacrifice for all the human race. "Now is my soul troubled," says he, "and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause I came unto this hour."

After having comforted his disciples, he told them, that whatever they should ask in his name, he would do it; and, if ye love me, says Christ, and keep my commandments, I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth, which is the Holy Ghost *, whom the Father will send in my name; he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance that I have said unto you. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "And this is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you: for greater love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends †. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. They will put you out of their synagogues; and even the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in pro-

* John xiv.

† Ibid. xvi.

" verbs,

“ verbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”

When Jesus had informed his disciples of all that should happen to them, after he had left them, he said, “ Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified *.” However, when his disciples came to him, and asked him, Where they should make ready the passover for him? he said, “ Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.” And they did as Jesus had ordered them, and made ready the passover. And when the evening was come, he sat down with the twelve: “ And, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, till the day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

These words of Jesus Christ, at this supper, have been universally regarded as the institution of one

* Matthew xxvi.

of the Sacraments of Christ's church; and they are particularly repeated by three of the Evangelists, who wrote at different times, but especially by St. Luke*, who has added the following words to the foregoing, "This do in remembrance of me."—St. Paul† likewise has given us an exact account of the manner of using this Sacrament in the first churches that were established after the death of Jesus Christ: and, after having given a severe reprimand to some of the Christians of those days, for eating this Supper in an indecent manner, he proceeds to give a full and clear account thereof, which he said he had received from the Lord himself; who, says he, "the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you: This do in remembrance of me. —After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."—I say, notwithstanding these words have been so fully explained by the Evangelists and by St. Paul, they have been variously interpreted by many who would pretend to give learned interpretations to the Scriptures. But, with great submission, I must beg leave to observe, that if we take them in the same sense in which the whole evangelistical doctrine

* Luke xxii.

† 1 Corinth. xi.

appears to have been written, they will bear no interpretation but that which arises simply from taking the whole sense into immediate consideration.—When Jesus told the Jews and his disciples, that he was the Bread of life, and that if they did not eat his flesh and drink his blood, they had no life in them; and said, “He that eateth
“ my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in
“ me, and I in him,” many of them were much offended.—Whereupon, to shew them that he was speaking of his spiritual body, he told them, that “it is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh
“ profiteth nothing: the words which I speak unto
“ you, they are spirit and they are life.”—Moreover, the whole gospel of St. John tends to prove the same doctrine; and therefore we must conclude, that Jesus Christ was always speaking of his spiritual body, or the word of God:—And when he brake the bread, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body, we are to give it no other interpretation but that of its being the symbol of his spiritual body; and the cup, as being the symbol of his blood of the New Testament; which symbols we are to take as the body and blood of Christ, and which, by faith, are to preserve our body and soul unto eternal life.

After Jesus had kept the Passover with his disciples, he said unto them, You will all be offended because of me this night; “For it is written, I
“ will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the
“ flock shall be scattered abroad: but after I am
“ risen

“risen again, I will go before you into Galilee*.” But his disciples did not seem to understand him: And Peter, who on all occasions seems to have expressed an uncommon zeal for his service, answering, said [unto him, “Though all men shall be “offended because of thee, yet will I never be “offended.”—But Jesus, who knew the weakness of human nature when we are left to ourselves, replied, “Verily, I say unto thee, that this night, “before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me “thrice.”

Afterwards Jesus went apart with the two sons of Zebedee and Peter; and finding that the hour was coming on apace, wherein his mortal part was to suffer, he said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; tarry here and watch with me. “And he withdrew from them about a stone’s cast, “and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, “if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: “nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done: “And, being in an agony, he prayed with such “earnestness, that his sweat was as it were great “drops of blood falling down to the ground†.” And when he arose from prayer, and came to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow: and he said unto them, Why sleep ye? arise, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. And while he was speaking, Judas, with a band of men from the chief priests and scribes, came and took him: whereupon Peter, and the rest of his disciples,

* Matth. xxvi.

† Luke xxii.

would have made some resistance : but Jesus would not suffer them to make any kind of resistance, saying, “ How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be * ? ” — “ The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it † ? ”

Then they led Jesus away to the palace of Caiaphas the high priest, where all the scribes and elders of the people were assembled in council, seeking after witnesses to convict him ; but they found none who were consistent ; although several false witnesses appeared, but their witnessing was such as was not sufficient to convict a criminal in such a situation. And Jesus not attempting to exculpate himself, nor even giving any answer to the questions that were asked him, the high priest stood up, and said unto him, “ I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God ? ” Jesus saith unto him, “ Thou hast said. Nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven ‡ . ” — Then said the high priest, He has spoken blasphemy, we have no occasion for any more witnesses ; and turning to the council, he said, What think ye ? To which they answered, He is guilty of death. — Whereupon the populace began immediately to spit in his face, to buffet him, and to strike him with the palms of their

* Matth. xxvi.

† John xviii.

‡ Matth. xxvi.

hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?

The more we reflect on the whole conduct of this Jewish council, the more we shall admire in them that depravity and degeneracy from every good quality, which always distinguished the bulk of the people of this nation. Moses, and all their prophets, had foretold them, that Christ should appear upon earth invested with great power; and that he would explain to them the will of the Supreme Being, which, through them, was to be communicated to all the Gentile world. And, if they had read those prophecies with attention, and enquired into the particularities of the birth and doctrines of Jesus, they would have seen, that the greatest part of them were even then fulfilled in him: But without doing of either, and without even considering that the mighty works which Jesus was daily doing among them, the like of which had never been seen in the world, could not have been done but by the immediate interposition of God, they condemned him to death; and treated him infinitely worse than they would, or by their law could, have treated the most abandoned malefactor; and this for no other reason but because he informed them that he was the very Christ of whom their prophets had prophesied.—Those people seem to have been deaf to reason, and to have lost all reflection. The condemning a person, whose whole life had been characterized by such uncommon acts of humanity and goodness, that

all mankind were astonished at him, and that many of the most sensible of their own counsellors were obliged to confess, "That he was a teacher come from God;" "For," says Nicodemus, "no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him:" I say, the condemning such a person, because he had told them the truth, and without enquiring whether what he told them was the real truth or not, or reflecting upon the consequences that might follow such an unparalleled act of injustice, shew them to have been the legitimate offspring of those worthies who ordered Aaron to make them gods to go before them, while Moses was receiving the tables whereon the law of God was written, in Mount Sinai.

Early in the morning of the following day, the chief priests and elders, after they had bound Jesus, led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor; where "they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that he himself is Christ a King *."—"Then said Pilate to them, Take him and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to condemn or put any man to death†:"—Although they had, the evening before, condemned Jesus, and treated him in the most barbarous and ignominious manner; his accusers and judges being the same persons.—Where-

* Luke xxiii.

† John xviii.

upon the governor asked Jesus, " saying, Art thou
 " the king of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him,
 " Thou sayest it. And when he was accused of the
 " chief priests and elders he answered nothing.
 " Then saith Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not
 " how many things they witness against thee? And
 " he answered him not a word, insomuch that the
 " governor marvelled greatly *:" and as he knew
 that they had delivered him for envy, " he said
 " unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me
 " as one that perverteth the people; and behold
 " I have examined him before you, and find no
 " fault in him touching those things whereof ye
 " accuse him: I will therefore chastise him, and
 " release him, -as I must release one unto you at
 " this feast. Whereupon they cried out all at
 " once, Away with this man, and release unto us
 " Barabbas †," who was a murderer.

" When Pilate was sat down on the judgment-
 " seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou
 " nothing to do with that just man: for I have
 " suffered many things this day in a dream, be-
 " cause of him ‡."—" Pilate, therefore, willing to
 " release Jesus, spake again to them. But they
 " cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Where-
 " upon he spake unto them the third time; Why,
 " what evil hath he done? I have found no cause
 " of death in him. But they cried out the more,
 " Let him be crucified §."—" When Pilate saw
 " that he could prevail nothing, but that rather

* Matt. xxvii. † Luke xxiii. ‡ Matt. xxvii. § Luke xxiii.

“ a tumult was made, he took water, and washed
 “ his hands before the multitude, saying, I am
 “ innocent of the blood of this just person : see
 “ ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said,
 “ His blood be on us, and on our children *.”
 “ —We have a law, and by our law he ought
 “ to die, because he made himself the Son of God.
 “ When Pilate heard that saying, he was more
 “ afraid ; and again went into the judgment-hall,
 “ and said unto Jesus, Whence art thou ? But Jesus
 “ gave him no answer. Then said Pilate unto
 “ him, Speakest thou not unto me ? Knowest thou
 “ not that I have power to crucify thee, and have
 “ power to release thee ? Jesus then answered,
 “ Thou couldest have no power at all against me,
 “ except it was given thee from above : therefore
 “ he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater
 “ sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to re-
 “ lease him : But the Jews cried out, saying, If
 “ thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar’s
 “ friend ; for whosoever maketh himself a king,
 “ speaketh against Cæsar †.”—This was touching
 the Roman upon a tender point : for all that
 they had said to him before was not sufficient to
 determine him to comply with their request,
 which, he appears to have been convinced, was
 unjust : but their saying that he was not Cæsar’s
 friend, if he set Jesus at liberty, was what he
 could not bear, and therefore he immediately de-
 livered him up to be crucified. And after they had

* Matth. xxvii,

† John xix,

mocked,

mocked, insulted, reviled, and treated in the most ignominious manner, the man who, from the time that he first appeared in public, had never ceased to do them all the good that lay in his power, curing all those who were diseased, and speaking peace to the distressed, they led him away, like a lamb to the slaughter, to be crucified; and when he was upon the cross, adding barbarity to insult, they gave him gall mixed with vinegar to drink; and said, He saved others; if he be Christ, the chosen of God, let him save himself. But Jesus, expiring in torments, and cursed and reviled by those inhuman wretches whom he was endeavouring to save, with that incomparable goodness whereby he had always distinguished himself, prayed for his murderers, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

While Jesus was upon the cross, there was darkness over the land from the sixth hour till the ninth hour; and about the ninth hour, when his mortal part was no longer able to support the torments which they had prepared for him, he cried with a loud voice, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? and soon after yielded up the ghost: when the earth did quake, the rocks rent, and the vail of the temple was rent in two parts, from the top to the bottom. "So that when the centurion, and those who were with him watching Jesus, saw the earth quake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."—

When

When the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross, it was wrapped in clean linen, and laid in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, which he had hewn out in the rock ; and the door of the sepulchre was covered with a great stone. But the chief priests and Pharisees, who were determined to falsify the sayings of Jesus, the next morning came to the governor, and said unto him, " Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, " while he was yet alive, After three days I will " rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his " disciples come by night, and steal him away, " and say unto the people, He is risen from the " dead ; so the last error shall be worse than the " first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch ; " go your way, make it as sure as you can. So " they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing " the stone, and setting a watch*." —But if these men had had any reflection, or sense of feeling, how much must they have felt for their infamous conduct, when their watch came on the third day, and informed them of all the appearances which they had seen, when Jesus Christ arose from the dead ! Those inhuman wretches seem to have been dead to reflection, and to every thing that was good ; for when their watch came and informed them of all the things that were done, " when they " were assembled with the elders, and had taken " counsel, they gave large money unto the fol-

* Matth. xxvii.

" diers,

"diers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you *."

But no part of the conduct of those people appears to be so hardened, and shews them to have been so degenerated from every thing that was good, as their telling Pilate, that the blood of Jesus Christ should be on them, and on their children : Although, after they had heard what had happened at his resurrection, and had seen that great miracles were performed by Peter and others in his name, it appears that they began to be afraid of what they had done ; for when they had brought the apostles before their council, the high priest asked them, saying, " Did not we straitly command you not to teach in this name ? and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us †."—Indeed the innumerable evils which soon after befell the whole Jewish nation, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in particular, agreeable to what Jesus Christ had foretold, and the dispersion of their descendants, who wander to this day like so many vagabonds upon the earth, without any fixed place of abode, or without their being admitted to have any real property ; notwithstanding the mighty efforts which were made by the emperor Julian, and others, to restore them to their ancient inheritance, and

* Matth. xxviii.

† Acts v. 28.

thereby

thereby to falsify the prophecy of Christ—I say, when we consider all those things with attention, it appears that, agreeable to their request, and conformable to their ideas of this matter, his blood has been required of them, and of their children.

Josephus, one of their principal authors, gives us a very particular testimony of St. John the Baptist *; and acknowledges that he was invested with the authority to baptize, and that he promised remission of sins to those who received his baptism. And notwithstanding this same author does not in express terms acknowledge Jesus to have been their Messias, and that the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish nation, was a punishment of God for their wicked and infamous conduct towards him, he comes as near to it as possible; and attributes, even apparently against his inclination, the ruin of this people to the vengeance of God, because they had put to death, in the most ignominious manner, James the just, a man of great virtue, and the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ. This was the James whom St. Paul said he visited when he went up to Jerusalem †.

After Jesus was risen from the dead, on the third day, he appeared first to Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, who came early in the morning to see the sepulchre, and said unto them, “Be not afraid; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me ‡.”—But when these women related this event to the

* Josephus lib. xviii. † Gal. i. 19. ‡ Matth. xxviii.

apostles,

apostles, their words appeared to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.—Afterwards he appeared to two of them, as they walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus, the same day, and reasoned with them of what had happened, and particularly of what the women had related; which they likewise thought to have been visionary; and explained to them, before they knew him, all that Moses and the prophets had said concerning himself, saying, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!—Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to have entered into his glory*?”—But as soon as they knew him he vanished out of his sight: whereupon they returned immediately to Jerusalem; and finding ten of the apostles, and some other disciples assembled, with the doors shut, for fear of the Jews, they said unto them, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. But while they were speaking, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you. And they were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit.” Jesus therefore said unto them, Why are ye troubled? “Behold my hands, and my feet: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” And after he had shewed them his hands and his feet, he asked them whether they had any meat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honey-

* Luke xxiv.

comb: and he did eat before them. " Then said
 " Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: As
 " my Father hath sent me, so send I you. And
 " when he had said this, he breathed on them,
 " and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.
 " Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted
 " unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they
 " are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve,
 " was not with them when Jesus came." And
 when the other disciples informed him that they
 had seen the Lord, he answered them, " Except I
 " shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and
 " put my finger into the print of the nails, and
 " thrust my hand into his side, I will not be-
 " lieve*." And eight days after, when his dis-
 ciples were assembled, and Thomas with them,
 " came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood
 " in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto
 " you:" and turning towards Thomas, he said,
 " Reach hither thy finger, and thrust it into my
 " hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust
 " it into my side; and be not faithless, but be-
 " lieving. Then Thomas, answering, said, My
 " Lord, and my God." Then Jesus said unto
 them, These are the words which I spake unto
 you, while I was with you, that all things must
 be fulfilled which were written in the law of
 Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms, con-
 cerning me. " Thus it is written, and thus it
 " behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the

* John xx.

“ dead the third day ; and that repentance and
 “ remission of sins should be preached in his name,
 “ among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And
 “ ye are witnesses of these things*.”

Jesus Christ continued to shew himself at different times, and in different places, to his disciples, during the space of forty days ; and, as St. Paul informs us, he was seen, after his resurrection, by five hundred brethren at once ; but he shewed himself very particularly to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias, when they were a fishing, and said unto them, “ Children, have ye any meat ?
 “ They answered him, No. Then said he unto
 “ them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship,
 “ and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and
 “ now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes†.” And when they had brought them to land, they saw a fire of coals there ; and Jesus said unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught, which they broiled. Then said Jesus again unto them, Come and dine ; and he gave them of the fish, and of bread. This appears to have been the first time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after they were departed from Jerusalem for Galilee. But when the forty days were nearly expired, it appears that he ordered them to return again to Jerusalem, and there to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye have heard of me : “ For John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with

* Luke xxiv.

† John xxi.

“ the Holy Ghost, not many days hence *.” The last time that Jesus shewed himself to his apostles appears to have been at Jerusalem: And, according to St. Luke, he led them out as far as Bethany; where they asked him, saying, “ Lord, wilt thou
 “ at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
 “ And he said unto them, It is not for you to
 “ know the times, or the seasons, which the Father
 “ hath put in his own power. But ye shall re-
 “ ceive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come
 “ upon you: And ye shall be witnesses unto me,
 “ both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Sa-
 “ maria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Then he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven: And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and continued there till the day of Pentecost; when they received the Holy Ghost, which had been promised them; and continued to do great miracles, in the name of Jesus Christ, and to preach him as being risen from the dead, and exalted by God to be a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins: So that great multitudes of people were now added to the church daily.

The apostles, being filled with the Holy Ghost, spake the word of God with boldness, and with great power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: And multitudes of sick and infirm

* Acts i. 5, 6, 7, 8.

people

people were brought into the streets of Jerusalem, “so that the shadow of Peter passing by, might pass over them, and they were healed every one.”

—In vain did the chief priests, and the elders, together with Herod, attempt to stop the progress of the Apostles doctrine:—Stephen and James sealed their belief with their blood; and Paul, who was their chief instrument in the persecution of the church was most miraculously converted to the faith in Christ, and became one of the chief preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, through a great part of the Gentile world, as well as among the Jews.

After the Apostles had established their churches in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, they separated themselves, and went into different countries, preaching the faith in Christ, and every where working great miracles, and establishing their doctrine with power; the Holy Ghost falling on all those who heard them, and who were disposed to be baptized, and to add themselves to the number of the believers. All mankind were amazed to see those poor and illiterate men preaching with such an authority, and doing such mighty works; for the Christian religion came into the world, and continued so, during the first age, without the least appearance of learning, or science, and with the greatest simplicity of thought and language, as well as of life and manners: The fundamental points of their doctrine being charity, humility, piety, and brotherly

therly love; with the belief of Jesus Christ's being the Saviour of mankind, and the intercessor, and mediator, with the Father, for the sins of the whole world; for which he offered himself a sacrifice upon the tree, to satisfy the justice of God; and that, through him, his mercies might be extended over all the human race.—This appears to be the main scope of the gospel, and of the preaching of the Apostles: And the principles of their doctrine seem to have been concealed from the self-sufficient, and learned, of those days, as well as from the proud and noble; by both which orders of men Christianity was either derided or persecuted.

The first who made use of the learning and philosophy of those times were the primitive fathers of the second age, and then only to confute the idolatrous worship of the heathens, and their plurality of gods; and to evince the being of one God, and the immortality of the soul, out of some of their own ancient authors, both poets and philosophers, especially out of the writings of Plato, and of his followers, and out of the verses of Orpheus and the Sibyls; which were then held in great veneration: Thus Minutius Felix, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and others, made use of the learning of such as were then ancient to them, and thereby became champions of the Christian faith against the Gentiles, by the force of their own weapons:—But, although it is evident that they did it with the best intention, and with a fervent zeal for the Christian religion; yet, as they suffered

ferred the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ, and of his Apostles, to be relaxed, in many particulars; introduced many ceremonies into the Christian church, which were not used during the time of the Apostles; and joined the pure simple dictates of Christianity, with the imaginary flights, and fallacious reasoning, of several of the then ancient philosophers; supposing that they should thereby be enabled to draw insensibly many of the Gentiles out of the gross idolatry in which they then were; it has since been found, that they greatly injured the Christian cause: and although, as I have just now observed, their intention was very good, their example should be a warning to all the pastors of the Christian church, not to deviate in the least from the pure doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, nor to trust to men's traditions, when they are not strictly agreeable thereto, however plausible and gilded they may appear:—For, after the third century, and upon the rise of the Arian, and other heresies, in the Christian church, their learning seems chiefly to have been employed in the defence of the several opinions professed by those sectaries, and in supporting the particular doctrines introduced into the Eastern or the Western churches:—And I very much doubt, whether this kind of learning and speculation has not been the cause of all the divisions of Christendom, since the restoration of learning in the Western parts of Europe, notwithstanding it has been employed, by each party, and sect, to prove their respective opinions to be the

most agreeable to those of the ancient fathers, and to the institutions of the primitive churches.

The Apostles, and those who were taught immediately by them, preached the doctrines of Jesus Christ through all the Roman empire, and in various other parts of the world; notwithstanding all the opposition which they met with, from the chiefs of the idolatrous sects, and from the proud and self-sufficient governors, and philosophers, of those days: And, after having given such examples of piety and goodness, as were worthy of the disciples of their great Master, they were led like lambs to be slaughtered, and sealed their doctrines with their blood, because they obeyed the commandments of their God. Great multitudes of Christians suffered the same fate, in the Roman empire, as well as in other parts of the earth, for no other apparent reason, but because they were Christians, and would not conform to the gross idolatry which then prevailed, and pay that adoration and worship to stocks, stones, and the works of men's hands, which they thought to be due only to the great God of Heaven.—Pliny tells us in his letter to the Emperor Trajan, that there were great numbers of people employed, apparently by the idol priests and others, to inform the magistrates against the Christians, for their not conforming to the laws then in being in favour of idolatry, which were very severe against them;—and that, in consequence of such informations, multitudes of them were daily dragged to prisons, and loaded with injuries; although

although it did not appear that they had been guilty of any crimes, except the resisting of idolatry may be called such:—and therefore this governor demanded particular advice of the emperor how he should act in his government with respect to those, as he then thought, unhappy people, who were worthy of compassion.

Upon the whole, on taking a cursory view of the rise and progress of the Christian religion, against all the opposition and persecution of the Jews and of the Gentiles; when we consider the resolution, firmness, and good conduct of the Apostles, who were all illiterate men, and as well of those who were eye-witnesses of the sufferings of their Master, who conversed with him after his resurrection, and who, after they had filled even their enemies with amazement by the mighty works which they did, were content to seal their testimony with their blood, and to follow him in all his sufferings:—I say, on reflecting seriously and impartially upon those matters, I believe there are very few who will not be ready to conclude, that those men must have been well convinced of the truth of their doctrine; and also, that they must have had more than human support, to have carried them through those fiery scenes, in which they were frequently involved; to have modestly withstood all the powers of the Gentile world; and to have propagated their religion through the greatest part of the earth.—And moreover, when we candidly examine the fundamental principles of their

doctrine, and particularly of the moral part thereof, by those laws of nature which the Supreme Being has given every intelligent being faculties to comprehend, we shall find them, as it were, explaining our own imperfect ideas, and holding forth a desirable peace to our troubled mind.— That pure and refined moral which they taught, as well by example as by precept, was such as made that of the philosophers, with all their pomp and parade, appear dull and uninteresting; and even their enemies were obliged to confess, that the like had never been heard upon earth: Likewise that pure form of worship and of prayer, which Jesus Christ and his Apostles taught their followers to offer up to the Father of Spirits, together with the condition of forgiving all those who had offended them, which was thereunto annexed, was such as had never before appeared in the world; was such as must give us an exalted idea of his Almighty Goodness, and of our own situation as intelligent beings; and in fact, was such as must make all the heathen forms of worship, which have been before described, appear contemptible, and even abominable.

Let us reflect, for a moment, upon the forms of religion which were used among the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Greeks, and Romans, with all their sects of philosophers and wise men, and in this enlightened age, our reason alone, without any assistance from the doctrines of Christianity, will teach us, that they were detestable.—The offering that
adoration

adoration to carved images, to crocodiles and other animals, to the sun, moon, planets, and all the host of heaven, and in fact, to a multitude of imaginary beings, which were formed by their poets, that was due only to the great God of nature and the Father of all things, which was the practice among the inhabitants of those countries, was such a degrading of human nature, as must make all their pretended knowledge appear to be foolishness. But the forms of religion which those people practised were pure and holy, in comparison to those scenes of blood and human sacrifices, which were practised among the more barbarous nations, the very idea of which is sufficient to fill every thinking person with horror, and to make him detest the very name of those infernal butchers.

It is true, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Zeno, the Brachmans, the Magi, and several of the Celtic philosophers, taught a species of morality, the worship of one God, the immortality of the soul, and a state of future rewards and punishments; but their ideas of those matters appear to have been very imperfect, and their lessons made but little impression upon the most enlightened of their followers: and notwithstanding all that the enemies of Christianity have said to the contrary, I must be permitted to say, that that pure morality, and that brotherly affection, which is worthy of rational creatures, was not known in the world before it was preached by Jesus Christ and his Apostles.—

But because the proud, arrogant, and self-sufficient part of mankind in those days, who thought themselves learned, could not comprehend some of the principles of the Christian faith, they rejected the whole.—They supposed themselves capable of developing all the mysteries of the Supreme Being; that they were equally intelligent with the Angels; and that, supposing every part of the Christian doctrines to be true, it was an injustice on the part of the God of heaven, not to have communicated it to them.—Thus the preaching of Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.—The former were so full of the ideas of Asiatic pomp and splendor, and of the things of this world, that they were scandalized to see a person appearing in such a humble manner, and associating with the lowest part of the people, while he was declaring himself to be the Messiah and the king of Israel; notwithstanding all the mighty works which he was daily doing among them; and which they supposed were done by the power of the devil: neither did they then consider, that the great king, who made their nation the terror of all that part of the world, was a poor boy taken from feeding his father's sheep.

When the Greek philosophers were first informed of the principles of Christianity, they seemed to think that the moral part thereof was admissible, as being only an illustration, or rather a refinement of the moral precepts of Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates,

tes, and Plato: but they could not comprehend that the Great Creator of the universe should send his Son into the world, enveloped in a body of flesh; first to explain his will to mankind; afterwards to let his mortal part suffer a most ignominious death upon the cross, as a sacrifice for their sins; and lastly, by reviving and re-investing himself again with that same body, to give his followers an idea of the resurrection from the dead, which they were to preach to all mankind, who, at the last day, were to rise from the dead with their natural bodies, which were to be changed in a moment, to give an account of the works they did in the flesh:—And, moreover, that Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross, was to be the mediator between God and man; and that all those who addressed the Father for pardon for their offences, were to do it through his intercession.—I say, as the Greek philosophers could not comprehend all this, they thought it such a piece of folly, that it would be doing an insult to their understanding, even to give an answer thereto; and therefore they rejected it altogether; and regarded the preachers of this doctrine as poor creatures who were unworthy of their attention. However, when they perceived that the Christian religion, notwithstanding all the opposition and persecution which it met with in every part, was gaining ground in the world, that it was preached with such power, and supported by such miracles, that all mankind, who gave themselves the trouble to examine it, were filled

filled with amazement, and that its preachers were every day sealing their testimony with their blood, they began to make a more particular enquiry into the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and after the mighty works which he was said to have done in Judea.— But although they found the facts so well attested that they could not disprove them, yet, as the greatest part of his doctrine was so much above the reach of their faculties, that they could not reconcile it to their manner of reasoning, they treated it as a fable, those who propagated it as fanatics, and declared that all the miracles which they did, were done by the power of magic.

Celsus was the first who wrote publicly against the doctrine of Jesus Christ: And as his reasoning has been the basis upon which all the arguments that have been made against Christianity, by the ancient as well as by the modern philosophers, were founded; except that many of the latter have denied the facts, which the former never did; I shall, with great submission, make some enquiry into the principal objections that have been made by the ancients as well as by the moderns against the principles of the Christian religion; and endeavour to prove, that they can have no solid foundation; and that, in a matter of this consequence, it behoves every person to reflect seriously upon the subject, before he suffers himself to be led away by such frivolous, although perhaps plausible, arguments, which are neither physically nor morally supported.

CELSUS

CELSUS was one of the sect of Epicureans ; and, if we may judge from his writings, was one of those self-sufficient philosophers, who have such an exalted idea of their own abilities, that they treat all the rest of mankind with a kind of contempt ; and flatter themselves, that they shew their superior genius, by attempting to turn the writings of others into ridicule, without endeavouring to disprove them by any one solid argument, or even to enquire whether the facts or the reasons which their opponents advance are well or ill founded.—This author, in his book which he calls *A treatise on the truth*, instead of endeavouring to disprove the facts advanced by the Christians, or even to convince mankind by solid arguments, that their religion was contrary to human reason, or to the opinions of the philosophers, whose writings were at that time in the greatest esteem in the world, sets out with accusing them of *holding secret assemblies, which were contrary to the laws of the country* :—Which laws, by the bye, were calculated to promote the worship of images, and the adoration of a plurality of gods, and were extremely severe against all those who followed any other kind of worship.—So that the only crime which this author hereby lays to the charge of the Christians, was that of acting with common prudence, by endeavouring to keep themselves out of the snares which were laid to catch them ; and strictly following the wise advice that was given them, “ to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

Celsus

Celsus then proceeds to condemn the Christian doctrine *in toto*, because it arose, as he says, from a barbarous source; namely, from Judea; and because it did not take its rise in Greece, or in some other country famous for its learning.—Although he afterwards admits, that even the barbarous nations, from the light of reason only, are capable of inventing a form of worship to offer up to the Divinity;—but, says he, to judge properly of it, to support it by solid reasoning, and by the practice of virtue, the Greeks were the most proper. However, he immediately after destroys his own arguments, if they may be called arguments, by telling us, that the Christians were notwithstanding in some measure prudent, by holding their assemblies, to preach, and to practise their maxims, in a secret manner; for by so doing, they covered themselves from the terrible punishments to which they would otherwise have been inevitably exposed: Then, to convince mankind how proper the Greeks, with all their learning, were to cultivate Christianity, or indeed any kind of morality, he gives the examples of the perils to which Pythagoras and Socrates were exposed on account of their moral principles; two of the greatest and wisest of all the philosophers that ever appeared in Greece; one of whom was banished his country, and the other was put to death, for preaching temperance and morality among their vicious countrymen.

This author, in the next place, attacks the moral precepts of the Christian religion, which, he says, contain nothing new, or peculiar to Jesus Christ, but

but are the same that had been long before taught by the philosophers.—If Celsus had any writings of the ancient philosophers which contained moral precepts equally pure and refined with those of the Evangelists, they are lost at present; because it is certain, that the moral which we find in those ancient authors that are handed down to us, is not to be compared with that which was preached by Jesus Christ and his Apostles; and I have not heard of any other author who has attempted to put the former in competition with the latter. He then enters upon the point of idolatry; and observes, *that those who profess Christianity declare against the belief of those gods which are made by men's hands, because there is no appearance that the works made, for the most part, by wicked and unjust men, and full of all sorts of impurity, can be real gods:* But to turn off, what he supposed was a merit, from the Christians, he immediately proceeds to shew, that this doctrine was not peculiar to them; and that it was not their books which taught it the first; and cites a passage out of Heraclitus, which says, that those who address themselves to inanimate bodies, as if they were gods, may be justly compared to those artificers, who would make a piece of brass or of copper to speak, with only touching it.

As the working of miracles through the name of Jesus Christ, was not ceased among the Christians at the time when Celsus wrote, this author takes a great deal of pains to prove, *that all the power*
which

which the Christians had to work miracles, arose from their invoking the names of certain demons; and from the particular correspondence they had with those beings.—I am very glad to see that Celsus avows, that the Christians did those miraculous acts in his time; because many of our modern philosophers positively deny this fact;—but the testimony of an enemy, in favour of any person or thing, must always have much weight. If therefore the Christians did miracles at the time when Celsus wrote, by invoking the name of Jesus Christ, it would be absurd in me, in this enlightened age, to attempt to prove, that this must have been done by the immediate interposition of the Divinity; because, from the idea which mankind in general have of the nature of demons, or of the power of the wicked principle, it is not in their nature to cure diseases, and to do all manner of good works, as the Christians did to their fellow-creatures; which even Celsus himself and their worst enemies have never attempted to deny.

But this author was not content with throwing out all this calumny against the Christians of his age; for, in the next page, he extends it to the person of Jesus Christ, the founder of their sect; whom he accuses, with great bitterness, *to have done all the miracles, which he did in Judea, by the power of magic; and to have afterwards banished from the society of his disciples, by the effect of his foreknowledge of things, those who had learnt the same secrets, and who might, as he had done, value themselves*

selves upon having done those miracles by the power of God; and, therefore, says he, if he rejected these men, as being wicked, he was wicked himself, seeing that he did the same things; and if he was not wicked in doing them, the others were not more guilty than him.—This is one of the strongest and most pointed accusations that Celsus has made against the person and mighty works of Jesus Christ; and it had some weight with the Greeks of those days, who were firm in the belief, that every thing done upon earth, more than what was common, or above the art or comprehension of their philosophers, was done by the power and interposition of demons; because, according to their doctrines, the Supreme Being had confined his part of the creation to spiritual beings; and all the material system of nature was created and governed by different orders of those created spiritual beings, so that the Omnipotent God did not at all concern himself with the situation or welfare of mankind; and therefore, whatever happened upon earth, which was above the reach of human knowledge, was effected by the power of demons; consequently Jesus Christ must have been a deceiver, to have said that he did his miracles by the immediate power of God.—This is the force of the reasoning of Celsus upon this head; and this was the general belief of the Greeks; which corresponds in some measure with the assertions of the Pharisees, who, as I have already observed, followed the doctrine of Plato; for when they

saw Jesus Christ doing his great miracles, they declared that he cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub the prince of devils.

Although Celsus meant to do a great injury to the Christian doctrine, by attempting to discredit the miracles of Jesus Christ and his followers, he has, strictly speaking, done it service, by admitting the facts, of which, as it appears, he was well informed, and corroborating the testimony of the Evangelists, which many of our modern philosophers have taken great pains to discredit, although no part of ancient history is otherwise so well attested, and carries upon the face of it such evident marks of its authenticity.—It would be useless for me to repeat again the just and reasonable answer which Jesus Christ made to the Pharisees, when they accused him of doing his great miracles by the power of Beelzebub, it being so well known; and therefore I shall direct my answer to Celsus's argument, which was much esteemed by many of the Greeks, as being conformable to their ideas of the immediate interposition of the Supreme Being in the affairs of this world.

As the Great God of heaven, according to their way of thinking, was only the Creator of spiritual beings, and did not at all interfere with the affairs of the human race, except with what regarded their souls, or their spiritual part, no kind of miracle on their bodies could have been done by his almighty interposition; and therefore Jesus Christ, as the Jews said of him, must have de-
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ceived the people, by saying that he worked his miracles by the immediate power of God.—But, to give all the weight that I possibly can to their argument, I will admit, for a moment, that the Supreme Being does not at all interfere with the material part of the creation, or with the disorders of the human body; yet, after the soul, or the spiritual part, is separated from the body, and the latter is become putrid, and ready to mix with the earth, from whence it arose, it does not appear, according to their own reasoning, that any inferior order of spiritual beings could command that soul, which had finished its task in this world, and was retired to its place of rest, to return again upon earth to re-animate that putrid body which it had before laid down, and to pass through a second state of probation. — However, this was the case of Lazarus, whom Jesus Christ raised from the dead after he had been laid in the grave four days, and was become putrid. And as this is a fact which none of the ancient writers against Christianity have ever attempted to deny, but, on the contrary, have admitted; I must be permitted to say, that, according to their own way of reasoning, this could not have been done but by the immediate interposition of the Supreme Being; and, consequently, Celsus, and the rest of the Greeks as well as the Jews, were highly blameable for saying that Jesus Christ was a deceiver; he having done what, according to their own doctrine, could not have been done, but by

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the immediate commands of the great God of heaven.

Porphyry, the emperor Julian, and others of the ancients who wrote against Christianity, seem to have copied all the principal arguments of Celsus, and to have pursued the same plan that was laid down by him : but none of them have even attempted to deny the facts contained in the Evangelists; on the contrary, they all, as Celsus had done, admit the facts, but attempt to discredit them, and to attribute them to the power of magic.—The testimony therefore of so many enemies of Christianity, who lived so near the time that the Christian doctrines were first propagated among mankind, and who had such opportunities to be well informed of the facts, in favour of the assertions of the Evangelists, must add such weight thereto, that it is really a matter of astonishment, that any of the modern writers should now have the assurance to deny the facts; and, without any foundation, attempt to impose their own vague reasoning upon mankind, in contradiction to a history of facts so well attested and founded.

Celsus afterwards proceeds to exhort his countrymen not to receive any articles of belief before they had well weighed them in the balance of human reason, and to follow only the dictates of that faithful judge; *otherwise, says he, you will be liable to be deceived in the doctrines which you adopt; because, if you believe what is proposed to you, with-*

but examining whether it is reasonable or authentic, you will be like unto those who suffer themselves to be seduced by the illusions of false priests and sorcerers. This is the case among the Christians; among whom there are many who will neither hear your reasons, nor tell you exactly what they believe, but content themselves with saying, You are not to examine, believe only, and your faith will save you; and who hold it as a maxim, that the wisdom of this world is evil, and that foolishness is good. If those people would give an answer to the questions that I would ask them, not that I wanted to be more particularly informed of their sentiments, for I know every thing that is said or done among them, but for to shew them that I am desirous to instruct all mankind; but they refuse it, and confine themselves to their usual answer, You are not to examine, but believe only; however, they should at least have informed me what are the articles that they are desirous I should believe, and from whence they draw them. — From this passage we may discover, not only the presumption and self-sufficiency of this author, but also his disposition to be uncandid, and to act very unbecoming a philosopher: For, as he says that he knew every thing that was said or done among the Christians, he must have known what the Apostle Paul taught them; namely “That they were to examine all things, “and to hold fast that which was good;” and not to suffer themselves to be led away by the unmeaning discourses of those vain boasters: But this author has maliciously avoided entering di-

rectly into this part of St. Paul's doctrine, although he immediately after takes it up obliquely, to turn it into ridicule, by saying, *that the wisdom of this world is evil, and its foolishness good.*

When St. Paul said, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;" no person who has any idea of St. Paul's doctrine, can suppose that he simply meant that real wisdom was folly before God: he meant only the pretended wisdom of those proud, vain, and presumptuous boasters, who imagined themselves capable of developing all the mysteries of God, who denied his providence and his empire over all created beings, and who thought their limited faculties were sufficient to put them upon a footing to reason with the more perfect spiritual beings. I say, St. Paul meant only, that the pretended wisdom of those philosophers was foolishness before God. Indeed, the doctrine of each sect respectively appeared foolishness before all the others. The Stoicians laughed at the credulity of the Platonians, because they believed the immortality of the soul, and its transmigration from one body into another; and the Epicureans called every thing superstition and folly which supposed a Divine Providence, or that the Supreme Being interested himself in the affairs of this world.

On the contrary, Jesus Christ seems to be particularly desirous, that his doctrine should be built

built upon the solid foundation of reason and wisdom; and would not declare himself publicly to be the Messias, before the Jews had seen the great works which he did, and had time to reflect thereon. He does not tell the Scribes and the Pharisees, that they should believe only; but always, with the greatest reason and judgment, endeavours to convince them of their errors, even when he knew that they were using every means to ensnare him.—We likewise find St. Paul, and the rest of the Apostles, doing the same thing. When the former was at Athens, and preached on Mars-hill, as there was a law then existing in that state, which made it death for any person to set forth a new God, what prudence and judgment did he display in endeavouring to convince that people, and particularly the Epicurean and Stoician philosophers, who, with all their boasted wisdom and knowledge, were fallen into the grossest idolatry, that he only preached and recommended as an object of their enquiry, the unknown God, whose altar then existed among them, and whose principal attributes he explained! and he moreover endeavoured to persuade them, that if they examined their own poets, and consulted their own reason, the truth of his assertions would evidently appear.—Hence therefore, I think we may justly conclude, that this accusation of our author's, and of many others who have copied after him, is void of truth, and had no foundation.

Celsus, in the next place, labours hard to prove, that there was a certain conformity of sentiments, implanted by nature, among the greatest part of the nations of the world, *who agreed in the same opinion, respecting the worship of a plurality of Gods; which sentiment was received from the most early ages, among the wisest nations; and the most enlightened people upon earth continued still in the same way of thinking: It was Moses, and the ancestors of the Jewish nation alone, who, says he, first opposed this opinion, and who declared themselves to be the chosen people of the great God; although the latter were only a company of ignorant shepherds, and the former an ambitious deceiver.*—However, if Celsus had read Pythagoras's first book upon the *sovereign good*, he would have seen, that that very learned and ancient philosopher mentions many nations, besides the Hebrews, who were of different sentiments respecting the Divinity; and, moreover, that he quotes several passages from the Jewish prophets, whom he mentions with the greatest veneration. But this author seems to be the declared enemy of Moses, and of the Jewish nation; and begins his accusation against them with attacking Moses's history of the creation of the world, and of the deluge, than which, he says, nothing can be more false and ridiculous: and, to prove this bold assertion, he quotes several fables, and the writings of the Egyptian doctors, who affirmed, that the world had then existed near ten thousand years; but that it had often suffered from deluges, and

as well from fire. *This, says our author, was the firm belief of all the Egyptian doctors, who were the wisest, and the most learned, of all mankind; and among whom Moses acquired all his knowledge; although he afterwards joined himself to a number of shepherds, and ignorant people, who were so blindfolded by his illusions, that they suffered themselves to be persuaded, that there was but one God, who formed the universe, and created the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein: But notwithstanding, after some time they gave themselves up to the worship of angels, and to magic; in this strictly following the precepts of their Moses.*

This is evidently a piece of calumny against Moses; because we find that great Lawgiver telling the Hebrews, "that they should not regard them who had familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them*;" and, although this people were often idolaters, there is not an example in all their history, where the worship of angels is established.—But Celsus took every opportunity to defame Moses, and the Jews in general, to the end that he might the better introduce the accusations which he has made against Jesus Christ, and his followers, who appear to have been the particular objects of his hatred: For, after accusing them in the manner I have before mentioned, he introduces a Jew addressing Jesus, and pretending to convict him of falsity, in many things; particularly of *his having given out that he*

* Levitic. xix. 31.

was born of a virgin :—Then he reproaches him with having been originally bred in a little village in Judea ; that his mother was a poor girl of this village, who lived by her labour ; and that, having been convicted of adultery with a soldier, called Panther, she was driven out of her village, by her espoused husband, who was a carpenter by profession. After this affront, she wandered about, in a miserable manner, from place to place, and was secretly delivered of Jesus :—And that he, finding himself in necessity, was obliged to go into Egypt, and hire himself as a servant ; where having learnt some of the secrets upon which the Egyptians valued themselves so much, he returned into his own country ; and being proud of the miracles which he knew how to perform, he declared himself to be a god.

It will be observed, from the foregoing passage, that our author has now laid aside the character of a philosopher, and of a reasoner, even of the Epicurean order, and has descended to low scurrility. Whenever a man of letters attempts to establish a fact of this kind, he ought at least to make it have the appearance of truth. But Celsus must have either been totally ignorant of the laws and customs of the Jewish nation, or otherwise he has asserted a most gross calumny, knowing it to have been such. For we find, in the law of Moses, which was constantly observed, as far as it respected those matters, “ That, if a damsel, “ who is a virgin, be betrothed unto a husband, “ and a man find her in the city, and lie with
“ her,

“ her, then ye shall bring them both unto the
 “ gate of the city, and ye shall stone them with
 “ stones, that they die; the damsel, because she
 “ cried not, being in the city; and the man, be-
 “ cause he hath humbled his neighbour’s wife;
 “ So thou shalt put away the evil from among
 “ you. But if a man find a betrothed damsel in
 “ the field, and the man force her, and lie with
 “ her, the man only that lay with her shall die;
 “ but unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing, there
 “ is in the damsel no sin worthy of death*.”—

And there cannot be the least doubt that this law
 was in force, at the time that Jesus Christ was
 upon earth; for we find a very particular
 example of a woman who was taken in adultery,
 recorded by St. John †, with the opinion of the
 Scribes and Pharisees thereon. Moreover, Jesus
 Christ was always supposed, even by the Jews
 themselves, to be the carpenter’s son, and the
 children which Joseph had by Mary were regarded
 as his brothers and sisters:—Even Josephus, their
 great historian, when he mentions James, who was
 put to death at Jerusalem, calls him the brother
 of Jesus, who was called Christ; but, if there
 had been any foundation for Celsus’s accusation,
 this could not have been the case; as Joseph
 would have been regarded as an infamous person,
 if he had taken a woman to be his wife, after he had
 convicted her of adultery, and forced her to leave
 her habitation; and who, by the laws of the coun-

* Deut. xxii. 25.

† Chap. viii.

try, should have been stoned to death.—Hence therefore, without making any observations upon what St. Matthew and St. Luke, who sealed their testimony with their blood, have said to the contrary, it is clear, that Celsus has asserted a most notorious falsehood with respect to Mary the mother of Jesus.

That an Epicurean, whose exalted idea of his own wit and abilities overcame his reason, should have asserted such barefaced absurdities, is not so much a matter of wonder, as he often contradicts himself in his own writings; but that a great French critic, of our days, so much esteemed for his veracity and integrity, and who must have been so well informed in the Jewish history, should have taken such pains to copy this passage of Celsus's, and to print it, with notes, in at least three different pamphlets, as an insult upon the understanding of his countrymen, is what must fill us with surprize.

What our author has asserted respecting Jesus's going into Egypt, and learning their arts of magic, and working his miracles thereby, is no less absurd upon the face of it.—The whole doctrine of Jesus Christ is as contradictory to that of the Egyptian idolatry, as light is to darkness. But let us suppose, for a moment, that it had been in the power of a magician to raise the dead, and to do all the rest of the great miracles that Jesus did, he would be destroying his own works, by endeavouring to persuade mankind, that they
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ought not to have any communication, or intelligence, with the demons, who were in a state of punishment for their wickedness; and that God would judge every man, one day, according to the works which he had done in the body:—Moreover he used his utmost endeavours to imprint this belief in the minds of his disciples, whom he had ordained, after his death, to preach his doctrine to the whole world.—If he had been a magician, and taught his secrets to his disciples, whom he had seen, to the end that they might publish his doctrine, by means of their miracles, it would have been very extraordinary that, among so many hundreds of persons who did those miracles, in his name, in different parts of the world, and even till the time of Celsus, not one would discover the secret; but that every one should be ready to expose himself to such dangers, and even to death, to establish a doctrine which condemned magic, as a wicked and infernal art.

Celsus in the next place proceeds, by his Jew, to accuse Jesus with having declared, *that the Spirit of God descended from heaven, in the form of a dove, upon him, when he was by the side of the river where John baptized him: For, says he, what witness, worthy of belief, can you produce to us to prove this vision? And who, besides yourself, if we would believe such a miserable criminal as you, has heard this heavenly voice, by which God declared that he received you for his Son?*—Afterwards this author, through the channel of his Jew, laughs at John the Baptist,

tist, and his baptism, and declared it to be all an illusion. Indeed it is not surprizing that an Epicurean, who denied even the providence of a God, should laugh at those things; but he was a little off his guard, by doing this under the character of a Jew, who, by believing the writings of the Prophets, must confess the probability of those facts; and who, by reading the writings of their great historian Josephus, who wrote near that time, must have seen it recorded by him, as the general opinion of the Jews, that John was invested with an authority to baptize, and that he promised forgiveness of sins to those who received his baptism. And this very John, whom Josephus mentions, bears record of his having baptized Jesus with water, and says, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven, like a dove, and it abode upon him; and I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost *."—Moreover, it does not appear that Jesus Christ ever mentioned this fact of himself: on the contrary, all the Evangelists say, that Jesus avoided, as much as possible, to speak advantageously of himself; and rather desired to have it discovered, that he was the Christ, by his works, than by his words. If I speak of myself, says he, my testimony is not true.—Besides, we find Jesus telling

* John i.

his disciples, after his transfiguration, "That they
 " should not tell the vision to any man, until the
 " Son of man be risen again from the dead *;"
 and, consequently, it is not to be supposed, that
 he would have related himself what John saw,
 and heard, when he baptized him.

Our author makes his Jew proceed, with great
 bitterness, to insult Jesus Christ, on account of
 his passion, when he was upon the cross, as if
 the Father would not give him any succours. *And,*
says he, notwithstanding your pretended divine mission,
you were not able to succour yourself.—But this au-
 thor, notwithstanding all his pretended knowledge
 and wisdom, so often forgets himself, that he
 throws all his arguments into confusion, and breaks
 entirely the chain of his reasoning; for he must
 have supposed, that the Jew had read the fifty-
 second and fifty-third chapters of their prophet
 Isaiah, which would have informed him, that this
 passion of Jesus Christ was foretold, and the
 cause thereof pointed out, by that prophet.—But
 the Jew, as if he had foreseen the answer that
 would have been given him, and well considered
 the force of it, *proceeds to accuse Jesus Christ with*
rashness, for saying that those prophecies were to be
applied to him; and moreover says, *that there are a*
number of others who apply the same to themselves.—
 According to all appearance, Celsus had heard of
 those false Christs, and false prophets, which arose
 about this time, and which are mentioned by Ga-

* Matthew xvii. 9.

maliel*; and if he had been so candid as to have given the opinion of this Jewish doctor, respecting them, his argument would have fallen of itself. The Samaritans seem to have followed the wise maxim of this doctor, respecting Dosithea, and Simon, magicians of this place, the former of whom pretending that he was the Messias, of whom Moses prophesied; and soon perceived, that their doctrine was no less absurd than infamous, and that it fell of itself.—On the contrary, when Celsus wrote, he saw the doctrine of Jesus Christ, supported by an invisible power, modestly combating against all the opposition and persecution, not only of the Jews, but of the whole Gentile world, and extending its benign influence to the utmost parts of the earth.

Our author now proceeds, of himself, to accuse Jesus *with being accompanied only by ten or eleven ignorant and infamous fellows, publicans, and fishermen, the lowest and most abandoned of mankind, with whom, after quitting his occupation, he wandered about from place to place, as a vagabond, and as an infamous person.*—I have already observed, that Josephus, in his history of the Jews, mentions one of those infamous persons, as Celsus was pleased to call them, as a just and virtuous man, although he was ignominiously put to death at Jerusalem; and that the greatest part of the Jews attributed the ruin of this city as the vengeance of God upon them, because they had destroyed

* Acts v.

this just and innocent man:—And, if we may judge of the Four Evangelists by their writings, and by the history of their lives, we must conclude, that they were of a very different character from what our author is pleased to give them. There is such an air of majesty, sublimity, candor, and simplicity, in their writings, that none of the Greek philosophers could ever imitate; and which will make every unprejudiced reader perceive, that their words are the words of truth.

It is surprizing that this Epicurean never formally attacked St. Paul, and his writings, who established the Christian religion in Greece; and who ought moreover to have been the particular object of his hatred; because he attacks the Epicurean order, and indeed all the Grecian philosophers, with such force, and at the same time with such truth and modesty, that all which they have said in answer tends only to expose their ignorance, and to make after-ages regard their pretended wisdom *as foolishness*: But the whole history of this Apostle was so unfavourable to our author's designs, that he studiously avoids entering into it.

This great Apostle*, speaking of those philosophers, says, “ That the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against those ungodly and
“ unrighteous men, who hold the truth in un-
“ righteousness. Because that which may be
“ known of God, is manifest in them; for God

• Romans i.

“ hath

“ hath shewed it unto them ; for the invifible
 “ things of him from the creation of the world
 “ are clearly feen, being underftood by the things
 “ that are made, even his eternal power and God-
 “ head ; fo that they are without excuse: Becauſe
 “ that when they knew God, they glorified him
 “ not as God, neither were thankful, but be-
 “ came vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh
 “ heart was darkened. Profeſſing themſelves to
 “ be wiſe, they became fools ; and changed the
 “ glory of the uncorruptible God into an image
 “ made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and
 “ four-footed beaſts, and creeping things. Where-
 “ fore God alſo gave them up to uncleannefs,
 “ through the luſts of their own hearts, to diſ-
 “ honour their own bodies between themſelves ;
 “ who changed the truth of God into a lie, and
 “ worſhipped and ſerved the creature, more than
 “ their Creator, who is bleſſed for ever.”

Moreover, our author has carried his calumny
 a little too far, in this particular ; for, by his de-
 claring that the Apoſtles were ignorant and illiterate
 men, and being tacitly obliged to confeſs, that
 they preached the doctrine of Chriſt, in oppoſi-
 tion to all the power of the Gentile world, brav-
 ing all dangers, and even death itſelf, and brought
 the greateſt part of the inhabitants of the earth
 to the knowledge of the word of God, he is like-
 wiſe forced to confeſs, that this could only be the
 effect of the divine power, which they declared to
 be their ſupport. It was not by their eloquence,

nor

nor by the artifices of rhetoric and language, which were taught in the Grecian schools, that they converted their auditors. If Jesus Christ had chosen persons who were in great reputation for their eloquence, wisdom, and learning, to be the preachers of his doctrine, our author would have had great reason to say, that the success of the Christian Religion was owing more to the men, than to the power of the doctrine. But, when we see a number of illiterate and ignorant men, as the Apostles declare themselves, by the Evangelists, to have been, and Celsus makes no difficulty to receive this part of their testimony, entering upon the most difficult points of argument, with the most learned men, and the greatest disputers of those days, whom they not only obliged to retire, as not being able to stand the force of their arguments, but frequently converted them to the belief of the doctrine of Christianity, we cannot avoid declaring, that they must have been actuated, and supported, by some invisible and supernatural power.

Afterwards Celsus introduces his Jew again, speaking to Jesus Christ, as if the former had been bred up in the Grecian schools, and had adopted all their ideas; *The ancient fables*, says he, *which supposed that Perseus, Minos, and others, were of divine original, as being descended directly from the gods, although we are not bound to believe them, at least attempt to give some colour to their arguments, by representing the actions of those men as great, mar-*
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vellous,

vellous, and more than human: But you, what have you done that is either remarkable, or extraordinary? What is there uncommon in your actions, or in your discourses? Although you were often solicited, in the temple, and in other places, to make it appear, by some convincing proof, that you were the Son of God.—

If Celsus had been so well informed in the Jewish history, as a celebrated French critic, of our days, who is his professed admirer, and who has literally copied, and reprinted, a great number of his arguments against Christianity, he would have seen the absurdity of putting an argument of this kind in the mouth of a Jew, who must have treated all the Greek fabulous history, as he had treated the history of Moses.—But, among all the Greek heroes and lawgivers, whose great actions are recorded in their fables, I would ask Celsus, and his admirers, which of them it was, whose mighty works were of such extent, and of such general good to mankind, as to be capable of persuading succeeding generations, that his birth was such as the fables have described it to be? Those very extraordinary men would have us believe the Greek history in every particular, and receive the Greek fables as our creed; and at the same time they reject the history of the Evangelists, which carries the evidence of truth upon the face of it; and which is better attested than any history, perhaps, that was ever wrote in the world.—Moreover the power of Jesus Christ has been such as to spread his doctrine over the

whole face of the earth ; and has not only drawn millions of souls out of idolatry, and all kinds of vices, to the knowledge of the true God ; but, by the pure moral which he hath taught, has greatly tended to civilize the most barbarous part of mankind, to open their understandings, and to make them think, and act, like rational creatures.—Even many of our modern philosophers, who plume themselves upon the knowledge which they suppose they have acquired of the Divine attributes, would have been as ignorant of those matters, as were the philosophers of Greece and Rome ; and the former would have continued in the same state of idolatry, that St. Paul has described the latter to have been in, if they had not been enlightened by the knowledge of the gospel, the principal part of which they pretend to deny.

After a number of arguments of the like nature, which for the most part contradict each other, Celsus again introduces his Jew, reproaching his countrymen, *with having ridiculously suffered themselves to be surprized by the tromperies of Jesus, with having abandoned the law of their fathers, and with having changed their name, and manner of living.* But either this author thinks that he does a meritorious act, by publishing a number of calumnies and falsehoods, or otherwise he must have been very ill informed of the customs of those Jews who embraced Christianity ; because nothing is more certain, than that they continued to observe the law of their fathers in all things, and

that the Apostles themselves set them the example. For, before that Peter had learnt, from the Holy Ghost, to raise his ideas from the literal to the spiritual sense of things, he refused to comply with the heavenly voice which spake to him at Joppa, and said unto him, when he saw the vision of the sheet which was let down from heaven, full of all manner of four-footed beasts, fowls, and creeping things, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat*:" and answered, "Not so, Lord; for I have never "eaten any thing that is common, or unclean."—Peter is here represented as adhering to the Jewish customs, respecting his eating and drinking, and as despising those who were not observers of the law of Moses. St. Paul tells us, likewise †, that St. Peter was, at that time, so fearful of offending the Jews, that, notwithstanding he had seen the great things which God had done for the Gentiles when James and others came to Antioch, where he was bishop, he, Barnabas, and the rest of the Jews who were present, would eat no more with the Gentiles, and separated themselves from them.—Undoubtedly there was some reason, that those who were designed to preach the gospel among the Jews should retain the Jewish customs: Moreover Paul himself lived with the Jews, as a Jew, to gain over those people to the Christian Faith; by persuading them that he had not, in any respect, renounced the observation of the law of Moses.

* Acts x. 9.

† Gal. ii. 12.

But

But this Jew of Celsus, who makes all his arguments appear false upon the face of them, when he might at least have preserved some appearance of truth and decency, proceeds with saying, *There are some among you who have renounced our laws and customs, under pretence that they are to be taken in a figurative and allegorical sense; and there are others who follow the spiritual sense, of which you talk so much, and continue to observe the ceremonies of the law: and there are others again, who, following the letter of the law, in which they suppose its spiritual sense is contained, acknowledge Jesus for him of whom the prophets had foretold, and will, at the same time, practise the law of Moses, as their fathers had done.*—Through the mouth of this pretended Jew, Celsus is accusing the Jews who had embraced the doctrine of Jesus Christ: but his arguments are not only absurd upon the face of them, but they contradict themselves; for he says, immediately after, *It is not but a few days that we have punished the impostor who abused us; and it is only since that time that you have abandoned the law of your fathers. Your doctrine is founded upon our law. How then, after having begun with our ceremonies, can you pretend at present to decry them?* It is certain, that the ceremonies of the law of Moses, and the writings of the prophets, which the Jews, who at that time had embraced Christianity, continued to observe, are the introduction to the doctrine of Jesus Christ; “who
 “ came not to destroy, but to fulfil, the law and

“ the prophets :” In the study of which we perceive those mysteries, which had been hid from the beginning of the world, and which were afterwards discovered by the manifestation of Jesus Christ; and therefore it could not be true, as Celsus observes, that the Christians, of what nation soever they were, attempted to decry either the laws of Moses, or the writings of the other prophets.

This Jew of Celsus proceeds to tell his countrymen, *That Jesus Christ was a proud, vain sectary*: —And he might, with as much justice, have told them that he was a Chinese; for the whole history of his life, as well as his doctrine, prove him to have been directly the contrary. “ Take my
“ yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am
“ meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find
“ rest unto your souls *.” Is this the language of a vain and ambitious man ?

Celsus proceeds, in the next place, to put a very extraordinary argument in the mouth of his Jew. *Why then, says he, should we have rejected and ill-treated him, of whom our prophets prophesied ? If we had done this thing, should not we have deserved to be punished more severely than any other people ?* — Undoubtedly. — And they have been most severely punished for their abominable conduct. Their capital city, and even their nation, was soon after destroyed : and those who escaped the sword of the Roman soldiers, were dispersed like vagabonds upon the face of the earth ; so that they are

* Matth. xi. 29.

actually the most miserable of all mankind ; as Jesus Christ had foretold they would be.—And, as I have already observed, it was the opinion of the most sensible part of their nation, and even of Josephus himself, that their ill conduct towards Jesus Christ and his Apostles drew this severe punishment upon them.

This Jew of Celsus then continues his accusations in the following manner : *How could we receive this person as a god, who, on one hand, did not do any of those great works which he proposed to do ; and who, on the other, when we had convicted him, and condemned him to be punished, was forced shamefully to hide himself, and to run from place to place, to prevent his being taken ; which he could not however avoid, as his own disciples betrayed him ? Was it necessary that a god should hide himself ? Would a god suffer himself to be taken and bound, and to be abandoned and betrayed by those with whom he had always lived, from whom he had hid nothing, and who regarded him as their Master and Saviour, and as the Son of the God of heaven ?*—This is an argument which has been copied from Celsus by many of our modern philosophers, and is part of the foundation upon which they have built their formidable works against Christianity ; and therefore I shall endeavour to give it a particular answer.

Celsus and his friends were, and actually are, greatly mistaken, if they imagine that we believe that the body of Jesus, which was then seen and felt, was God ; for we find Jesus himself, when

he was in the agony of death upon the cross, crying aloud, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—But when we find the prophet Jeremiah * saying, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh;" or the prophet Isaiah † saying, "That before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me," we are to suppose, as the Jews did, that it was God who spoke in this manner, and who made use of the body of the prophet only as an organ to make himself be understood by mankind. The Greeks likewise believed that it was a god, that said by the mouth of the Pythia of Delphos, "I can count the number of the grains of sand upon the sea-shore, and measure the sea; and I understand the language of a dumb person ‡."—In the same manner do we believe that it was the Word of God, or the Son of God, which said in Jesus, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; I am the door; I am the living Bread which came down from heaven §;" with other expressions of that nature. Moreover, when Jesus would give his disciples a more exalted idea of the Son of God, he said unto them, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them ||."—And he promised his disciples to be with them to the end of the world ¶.—I do not mean, from hence, to separate

* Jeremiah xxxii. 27.
lib. i. § St. John.
xxviii. 20.

† Isaiah xliii. 10.
|| Matth. xviii. 20.

‡ Herodot.
¶ Matth.

the Son, or the Word of God, from the man Jesus Christ; for since the mystery of the incarnation, the body of Jesus was so united with the Word, as to form only one whole; which was "equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood."—

When Jesus was upon the cross, the Son of God left the mortal part to suffer for the sins of the world: and then we find Jesus crying aloud, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But after his resurrection, the same body was spiritualized, and became a part of the Godhead.—This is the part of the doctrine of Christianity which has given the greatest disgust to the philosophers, both ancient and modern, because they found it above their comprehension; as the excess of their pride and vanity made them suppose, that they were in a situation to comprehend all the mysteries of the Creator. But what will those philosophers say, when, with great submission, I tell them that their faculties are so limited, that they are not in a situation to discover how, or by what agent, the natural motions of their respective bodies are performed? And will they then have the presumption to attempt to discover the most secret mysteries of God? Happy are we, that the Supreme Being has opened a door to let us out of that state of misery into which, as free agents and intelligent beings, we had plunged ourselves!

Celsus's Jew tells us, that Jesus Christ did not do any of the great works which he proposed doing;

doing ; particularly, says he, when the people desired him to shew them a sign, he said unto them, " Destroy this temple, and in three days I " will raise it up *." *But did he ever perform this ?* Jesus Christ spoke of the temple of his body, which he did raise again in three days, as he promised. The other part of Celsus's accusation, respecting Jesus Christ's hiding himself to avoid his being taken, is not true ; because all the Evangelists declare, that he had frequently foretold what was to happen to him, and did not avoid being taken, as he was at the mount of Olives, where he often resorted with his disciples, when he was seized by the chief priest's officers and men ; and Judas, who was the only one of his disciples that betrayed him, was well acquainted with this place. Moreover, Jesus had told his disciples before that he was betrayed, and that the betrayer was coming with a guard to take him. And when they attempted to make a resistance, he said unto Peter, who had cut off the ear of one of the high-priest's servants, " Put up again thy sword into his place ; " for all they that take the sword shall perish " with the sword. Thinkest thou not that I can " now pray to my Father, and he shall presently " give me more than twelve legions of angels ? " But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, " that thus it must be † ?" — The Evangelists have likewise given us a very particular account

* John ii. 20. † Matthew xxvi. 54.

of the fate of Judas : “ I have sinned,” says he, “ in
 “ that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” This
 was a very strong confession of his crime : and
 notwithstanding his extreme avarice, he brought
 back the thirty pieces of silver, and went and
 hanged himself.

In the next place, Celsus’s Jew accuses the disciples of Jesus *with having falsely asserted, that their Master had foreseen and foretold all things which happened to him ; and with having invented the history of the Evangelists, to support their enthusiastical designs.* — This passage of Celsus has likewise been copied literally by the greatest part of our modern philosophers, and is the foundation upon which the principal part of their arguments are founded. But I must beg leave to observe to our philosophers, that it is not in this manner that men invent fables. When we regard the books of all the ancient philosophers, with their pomp and learning, they will appear but poor performances against the New Testament : the majesty, sublimity, and simplicity of its style, have never been equalled by any writer, since the creation of the world ; and the facts contained therein are better attested than are those of any other part of ancient history. The great acts which were done by those poor illiterate fishermen, have filled the whole world with wonder : and they modestly, but firmly, supported their doctrine against all the opposition and persecution of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews ; and without any views of
 temporal

temporal interest, and with a resignation worthy of the doctrine which they taught, they sealed their testimony with their blood, praying that their heavenly Father would forgive their inhuman butchers, and “lay not this sin to their charge*.” — It has not been in this manner that proud, ambitious sectaries and enthusiasts have shewn themselves before the world. It is not common to see poor illiterate men shewing such wisdom in their discourses, such presence of mind, such an empire over their passions, such meekness, goodness, and a forgiving disposition in suffering and in dying; and all this without weakness, and without ostentation.

The falsity of which Celsus’s Jew has accused them, I shall presently prove to be a calumny of that miserable and malicious author; whose works I should have thought much beneath my notice, if they had not been made the foundation of the principal arguments which have been published by some modern authors against Christianity. He says, that Jesus Christ did not foresee and foretell what was to happen to him, to his disciples, and to the whole Jewish nation. But he must have seen and known that the contrary was the truth, as the Evangelists were published long before the destruction of Jerusalem; the particulars of which Jesus Christ had foretold; and this great event had happened before Celsus wrote his book against the doctrine of Christianity. Moreover, as Celsus

* Acts vii. 60.

pretends

pretends to have been fully instructed in this doctrine, he must likewise have known that Jesus Christ had foretold his disciples all that would happen to them after his death and resurrection; that they would be persecuted by all men for his sake; and particularly, that they "should be brought before kings and governors for his name's sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But, says he, when they deliver you up, take no thought how, or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven *."—Again, Jesus said, "that this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations †."—These, and many other prophecies of the like nature, were published by the Evangelists soon after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and were even copied by this author into his book: And although he saw them fulfilling daily, by the bloody persecutions which the Christians were then suffering, by the firmness with which they were declaring the gospel of Christ before men, and by the rapid progress which this doctrine was making, notwithstanding this persecution, in almost every part of the world,

* Matthew x. 18. 32.

† Ibid. xxiv. 14.

this

this Epicurean had the effrontery to say, that the disciples of Jesus had falsely advanced that their Master had foreseen and foretold the things which would happen to him and them. There is no pleasure in refuting the arguments of an author who asserts such notorious falsehoods. If he had said that the art of prophesying, or of foretelling events, was not such a great secret, but was known to many who were versed in the arts of magic, astrology, &c. he would at least have kept up some appearance of decency: Although a philosopher of those days * tells us, that Jesus Christ and Peter had the knowledge of things to come, and had actually foretold many great events which afterwards happened; and therefore, says he, as the first authors of the doctrine of Christianity foresaw those events at a great distance of time, they must have been filled with divine virtue.

Our author's Jew continues his accusation in the following manner: *What god, what demon, or what wise man, says he, knowing that those things would happen to him, would not endeavour to have avoided them, and not suffer himself to be surprized by those evils which he foresaw were ready to fall upon his head?*—Socrates knew well that the cup of poison which was presented to him would kill him, and yet he drank it: he was likewise informed by Criton, that he might save himself out of the prison, and avoid the danger that threa-

* Phlegon Chronic. Lib. xiv.

tened him ; but he did not judge it proper so to do ; esteeming it to be more honourable to die as a philosopher, than to preserve his life by such means as were unworthy of him. Leonidas, chief of the Lacedemonians, was likewise well informed that he should die by Thermopyles, with those who followed him ; but, far from endeavouring to preserve his life at the expence of his honour, Let us dine, said he to his followers, like men, who may sup in the shades below. Hence, therefore, according to Celsus's own ideas of things, if those great and learned Greeks preferred death to dishonour, why should he accuse Jesus of doing the same ? Moreover, as this author had read the New Testament, he must have seen that St. Paul, the disciple of Jesus Christ, was informed of what would happen to him when he came to Jerusalem ; but he nevertheless determined to brave the dangers which threatened him, and blamed those who attempted to make him change his design. At the time when Celsus wrote, he likewise must have seen and heard of numbers of Christians who, seeing themselves condemned to death for following their religion, and knowing that they might be pardoned, and have all their property restored to them, if they would abandon it, and worship the gods of the Gentiles, despised life, and voluntarily submitted themselves to all the tortures that their enemies could inflict upon them, rather than renounce their Saviour and their God.

Again,

Again, our author continues his reasoning in the terms following: *If Jesus did not suffer, but because he had before resolved to do it, to obey his Father, it is evident, that being God, and exempt from all constraint, nothing that they did to him, by his own free will, could give him any pain or grief: but he must have suffered exceedingly, or why did he make such cruel complaints and lamentations? why should he fear, and wish to be delivered from, this death? He expresses himself in the following manner: O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.*—The former part of Celsus's argument is absurd upon the face of it: for if, as he confesses, Jesus suffered, because he had before resolved to do it, to obey his Father, it is impossible but that those who made him suffer should give him pain and grief; as it is not an agreeable thing to suffer. But if, according to our author's argument, nothing that was done to him by his own free-will, ought to give him any pain or uneasiness, how could he have suffered? Our author was deceived, by not considering that Jesus, when he took our nature upon him, subjected himself likewise to the same pains and sorrows that we are liable to, sin only excepted; so that, when he had taken the former, it was not in his power to exempt himself from the latter, except he had changed the whole system of nature. As I have already observed, he could have avoided falling into their hands; but as he came into the world for that cause, and knowing how much the sacrifice which he was

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about

about to make for mankind would be useful to all the human race, he presented himself voluntarily to those who came to take him.—The second part of our author's argument (which has also been copied by many modern philosophers) shews his malice and want of candour: for, in the place of acknowledging the sincerity of the Evangelists, who set forth every thing which made for and against them, and gave a faithful narrative of facts, he makes use only of a part of what they said, and would persuade the world, that they said things which they did not say. The Evangelists make no mention of any lamentations that Jesus made; and when he said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," he added, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And again, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.*"—Jesus herein shewed a great degree of firmness, but, at the same time, a perfect resignation and obedience to the will of his Father. In the first part of this prayer, Jesus speaks as a man, and shews the weakness of human nature; but still he shewed his obedience, by not desiring the cup to pass away from him, except it was possible; but he afterwards shews the quickness and force of the Spirit of God, by adding, "not as I will, but as thou wilt."—Moreover, the sufferings of Jesus Christ were to serve as an example to those who would follow

* Matthew xxvi. 39, 42.

him in the regeneration of life, and as a consolation in all their afflictions; as the faithful servant will never scruple to endure a trifling part of what his Master has endured.

The prophets prophesied of the first and second coming of Christ: of the first, where he was to appear to teach mankind the will of his heavenly Father, to live among them, and to suffer death by their hands; of the second, when he should come in glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead: and therefore Celsus, and after him other authors, who have wrote against Christianity, tell us, *that the prophets speak of him who was to come, as of a great prince, and a conqueror, who would make himself master of the whole earth, and be the king of kings. But, says he, they never spoke of that pest, that cheat, that miserable man, who was full of vanity, who only supported himself by his miracles, wrought by magic; and who finished his life upon the cross, the most ignominious of all deaths: Is that the character of a God, or of the Son of a God?*—It is certain that the greatest part of the Jewish nation, full of the idea of Asiatic pomp and grandeur, disregarded what the prophets said of Christ's first coming, to teach mankind the will of his heavenly Father; and supposed that the prophet Isaiah, in particular, was speaking of some other person, when he was giving a description of Christ, as a person who would be “despised and rejected of men; as a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for
“ our

“ our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace
 “ was upon him, and with his stripes we are
 “ healed*.” They imagined that the king of Israel would be a great and powerful prince, and a conqueror, from their misunderstanding the words of the prophets, or from their wilful disobedience thereto; and therefore so far Celsus was not so much to blame, for putting the sentiments of a great part of the Jewish nation, respecting this matter, into the mouth of his Jew. But the giving the character of a pest, a cheat, and of a miserable person, full of vanity, to a man whose whole private and public behaviour was as amiable and edifying as his doctrine was pure and just; whose humility and brotherly affection could not be equalled, but by his merciful disposition and the goodness which he always manifested to those who applied to him for relief; shewed a degree of malice in Celsus which was even unworthy of an Epicurean philosopher.

From all that the Jews, Celsus, his followers, and in fact all those who have written to oppose the doctrine of Jesus Christ, have said against him, I cannot discover that they had the least colour for a reason, or a proof, that ever he did any immoral act, or that all which the Evangelists have said of him was not strictly true.—If the writers against Christianity, or the Jews, had any well attested proofs to shew, that what the Evangelists have written of their Master was not true, their testi-

• Isaiah liii.

mony would undoubtedly have great weight with all the impartial and discerning part of mankind: But a rhapsody of gross calumny; assertions, contradictory in themselves, and not properly supported; and an attempt to insult the understanding of men of moderation, judgment, and diligent enquiry; are not to be placed in the balance against a well-attested narrative of facts, whether the former come from a Celsus, from a Voltaire, or from any other person. The honest reasoner will always be known by his modesty, candor, and the desire which he shews to discover the truth; and, although he may be in an error, he is worthy of our esteem: But the presumptuous, dogmatical, and impertinent babbler, calling himself a philosopher, who would mislead his fellow-creatures, if he imagined he should thereby gain, for a time, the applause of the vulgar, and who would sacrifice the best-attested matters of fact, to his own confused and chimerical systems, is an object of contempt, and a real pest to human society.

But to return again to our author; who now makes his Jew ask the rest of his countrymen, *What has this Jesus done that was either great or noble, to prove that he was a God? did he despise his enemies, and regard all their designs against him with contempt? or does he at present shew his Divinity to the eyes of the world, and efface the shame of his death, by revenging the injuries which they continue to do, through his faithful followers, to him, and to his Father? For, supposing all that his disciples say of him be true, the*
excellency

excellency of his doctrine, and the purity of his life, were not sufficient to place him above the rest of mankind.

Celsus, and his followers, admit all those matters, recited by the Evangelists, which they imagine will furnish them with some accusation against the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and reject all such as tend to confirm his Divinity: It would be more honest, either to reject the whole, or to admit the whole.—According to the Evangelists, while Jesus was in an agony upon the cross, “there was “darkness over the whole earth, from the sixth to “the ninth hour; and the sun was darkened:” Moreover, “the vail of the temple was rent in “twain from the top to the bottom; the earth did “quake, the rocks rent, and the graves were “opened*.” So that, besides the mighty works which Jesus did in his life-time, when his mortal part expired upon the cross, all nature trembled.—But our philosophers may pretend to deny the facts, or to call them illusions, because they are told by the disciples of Jesus: If that should be the case, I must beg leave to tell them, that a learned ancient author† tells us, that the great eclipse of the sun, which happened in the reign of the emperor Tiberius, when Jesus was crucified, and when the moon was almost in opposition to the sun, was such as astonished all the astronomers and philosophers of those days; and that the great

* Luke xxiii. 45. Matthew xxvii. 51.
Chronic. lib. 13.

† Phlegon

earthquake, which happened at the same time, was general over all the then known face of the earth. Celsus must likewise have known, that, in his time, multitudes of people were cured, in a miraculous manner, through the name of Jesus Christ: Was the like ever done, in the name of any person, almost one hundred years after he left this life, since the creation of the world? Will the advocates of this author pretend to say, likewise, that this was done by magic? Therefore, in answer to Celsus's first question, I must observe, that it was in this manner that Jesus manifested himself to be the Son of God.

The second question, proposed by our author, has likewise been answered, in a great measure, by the foregoing: Jesus has given convincing proofs of his Divinity to all the impartial part of mankind, who form their judgment of those things from the incontestable facts which appear before them. Moreover, as Celsus had read the history of the Evangelists, which was published soon after Jesus was crucified, he must have there seen what was prophesied respecting the Jews and the city of Jerusalem; where the punishment that they were to receive is particularly pointed out; and as that prophecy was fulfilled, in part, when he wrote his book, Jerusalem then being totally destroyed, as Jesus Christ had foretold; it is surprising, that he should expose himself so much as to ask a question of this kind. But, to carry this point a little farther, our modern philosophers, who

who are the admirers of Celsus, must likewise have been well informed of the great attempts that were made, by the emperor Julian, to re-build again the temple at Jerusalem, to re-establish the Jews in their ancient habitations, and thereby to convince the world, that the prophecies of Jesus Christ were false; and as well what were the consequences of those attempts: they are also well acquainted with the wretched situation that the Jews have been in since those days; and in which they are actually at present: And, moreover, as our author supposed that the Greeks and Romans did a great injury to Jesus Christ, and to his Father, by the horrid persecutions which they inflicted upon his faithful followers, who were never proved to have been guilty of any immoral act; I think the Christians had a sufficient revenge, if Celsus and his admirers think that such acts of revenge can be agreeable to a well-disposed mind, in seeing their bloody persecutors cut off from the face of the earth, and all their pompous idolatry levelled with the dust. No person but a Celsus could have asserted, no other than a Voltaire would have propagated, that the excellency of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and the purity of his life, were not sufficient to place him above the rest of mankind: We should have been greatly obliged to Celsus, and to Voltaire, if they had told us, what then were sufficient for this purpose.

Again; this author, who, as I have already ob-

and the illusions of impostors, in the same rank; proceeds to observe, *that the force of truth is very strong; he declares very clearly himself, as I learn from your books, that others will present themselves before you, and do the same miracles that he did, and yet he declared them to be wicked impostors. He likewise mentions a certain Satan, by whom his miracles would be imitated. This is confessing, that they had not any thing divine in them, and that they were the productions of an impure cause. In endeavouring to caution his followers against the wickedness of others, he could not avoid laying open the deceit which he practised himself. Was it not a piece of folly to regard him as a God, and at the same time regard others as wicked impostors who did the same miracles which he did? If we are to form our judgment from thence, what reason had he to condemn others, and not condemn himself upon his own testimony? For it is he who has declared, that all the miracles which he did, are the certain marks, not of the virtue of a God, but of the fraud and wickedness of men.*

Celsus has here asserted a falsity, and then he pretends to reason upon it, as if it was a truth.—Jesus Christ never told his disciples, that others would come and do the same miracles which he did, and yet they would be only wicked cheats. On the contrary, he says, “Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me, ye
“ that

“ that work iniquity.” And again, “ If any man
 “ shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there,
 “ believe it not. For there shall arise many false
 “ Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great
 “ signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were
 “ possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Be-
 “ hold I have told you before *.”—The objection
 of Celsus would undoubtedly have had some weight,
 if Jesus had absolutely ordered his disciples to be
 upon their guard against those who pretended to
 work miracles, and had not added any other thing.
 But, seeing that he ordered his followers to be so
 particularly upon their guard only against those who
 declared themselves to be the Christ; which was
 not the case of those impostors who supported
 themselves by the ordinary arts; and that it would
 be in his name that they would cast out devils,
 and do many wonderful works, although they
 were otherwise workers of iniquity; this is not
 at all the mark of magic or illusions; on the con-
 trary, it banishes every suspicion thereof in Jesus
 Christ, and in his disciples, and powerfully proves
 their divine authority; which must have been very
 great indeed, when not only the Apostles and their
 followers, but also that wicked and disorderly
 persons should be able to do great miracles through
 the name of Jesus Christ. If Celsus and his friends
 had well considered this argument, they would
 have omitted it entirely; because it makes much
 against them; especially as they put it in the mouth

* Matth. vii. 23. and xxiv. 23, 24, 25.

of a Jew, who regarded the miracles of Moses as the effects of the power of God ; but declares those of Jesus Christ, the truth of which he never attempts to deny, to be worked by the power of magic, and to have nothing divine in them : thereby imitating the Egyptians, who declared that all the miracles that Moses did in Egypt, were done by the power of magic, although they confess that their magicians could not stand before him. However, if we may judge by the success, we cannot avoid saying, in favour of Moses, that he was guided by the power of the Divinity, without which he could not have drawn the Israelites out of Egypt, and established them in the land of Canaan ; especially as he had to do with an obstinate and rebellious people, who were desirous to adopt all the idolatry and wickedness of the neighbouring nations. Jesus Christ likewise, who came into the world to declare the will of his heavenly Father to mankind, which they could not discover clearly by the lights of nature, had to combat against all the idolatrous customs of the Gentiles, the obstinacy and hypocrisy of the Jews, and the imaginary systems of the different sects of philosophers, which had been many centuries forming, and which were become like a second nature among those people respectively. If, therefore, Moses was obliged to work miracles to make known his Divine mission, not only to the leaders of the Israelitish nation, but also to the people in general ; why should this Jew think it strange, that

that Jesus Christ should do the same, or even greater miracles, before a people who were accustomed to demand such signs? As he would prove himself to be greater than Moses or any of the prophets, before those people, who only judged of men and things from what they at the instant appeared to be, it was absolutely necessary that he should do greater works than ever were done before upon earth.

Celsus's Jew proceeds, in the next place, to ask the Christians, *What was it then that persuaded you to embrace Christianity? Was it because that this deceiver foretold you, that, being dead, he would rise again?* And then he tells them, *That he was ready to believe, as they did, that Jesus had foretold this thing; but that there were many other impostors who made use of artifices of this nature, to establish their credit in the world, and to gain by the credulity of the simple: which was the case of Zamolxis, the slave of Pythagoras among the Scythians; of Pythagoras himself in Italy; and of great numbers of others, whose history is extant in Greece. But it is a question, whether there ever was a person, who, being really dead, rose again with the same body. You pretend that all the histories related by the Greeks and others respecting these things, are only fables, and not to be believed; but do you imagine that the catastrophe which is laid open in your history, has more the appearance of truth, notwithstanding all the imaginary circumstances with which you have enriched it; by the cries which your crucified God made, when he was dying; by your earthquakes;*

quakes ; and by your darknesses ? You say that he rose again after his death, when he could not help himself during his life ; and that he shewed the marks of his punishment upon his body. But who saw them ? If we may believe your history, a mad-woman, and some other person of the same cabal : who perhaps substituted a dream for the reality ; or who, having his imagination struck with the idea of the resurrection, formed himself the object of his illusion, upon the plan of his own desires, as it has happened to a great number of other persons ; or, which is the most probable, who would surprize mankind by this supposed miracle, and give other cheats the idea of doing the same thing.

This is another of Celsus's arguments, which has been copied, and illustrated, by some of our modern philosophers, and made a principal pillar to support the spacious fabric of their reasoning against the doctrine of Jesus Christ ; although it will be no difficult matter to make it appear to be false and absurd upon the face of it.—In the first place, Celsus puts a number of Greek fables, and the Epicurean doctrine respecting the resurrection of the body, in the mouth of a Jew, whose religion taught him not to believe one word thereof ; and then he makes the Jew ask the Christians, whether there was ever an example of a person, who, being really dead, rose again with the same body ? when he must have known that the Jew, by reading the history of their prophets, would have found two examples of this nature ; the one, of Elijah raising the son of the widow

widow of Zarephath *;—and the other of Elifha's raising the son of the Shunammite †.—How absurd therefore must Celsus have been, to have made a Jew demand a question of this nature; and to be so well acquainted with the Grecian fables; of which, by his education, he ought to have supposed him to have been entirely ignorant?

This Jew begins his argument with giving into the belief of the Christians, that Jesus did actually foretel that he would rise again from the dead; and then proceeds to prove, that this was all a cheat, and calculated to impose upon mankind: and, to give an air of truth to his argument, he says, that Jesus only appeared, after his death, to a mad-woman, and to another of the same cabal. The evidence of the mad-woman he counted for nothing, and attempts to invalidate the testimony of the other, by observing, that it was only an imaginary phantom that he saw, which was formed upon the plan of his desires; or that he was one of those cheats, who publish stories of this kind, to impose upon the credulity of the simple. This is the force of the argument, which, if it had been made by Celsus himself, and been founded upon facts, would undoubtedly have had some weight. But besides the absurdity of it, which I have already pointed out, I will proceed to shew, that it was founded upon false facts.

* 1 Kings xvii.

† 2 Kings iv.

Celsus has, throughout his whole book, made use only of such parts of the history of the Evangelists as he supposed would tend to invalidate the whole; and those parts which he apprehended would have a contrary tendency he omits entirely, and substitutes falsehoods in the place thereof. All the Evangelists, with St. Paul and others, concur in observing, that Jesus Christ shewed himself to a great number of persons after his resurrection; and, at different times, eat and drank with them, during the space of forty days; and even performed a miracle in their sight, at the sea of Tiberias*. Moreover, he gave a long and curious explanation of the scriptures to Cleophas and his companions, while he walked with them, from Jerusalem to Emmaus†.—Hence therefore, as Celsus has not dared to contradict one fact of the Evangelical History, but admitted it in many points, we are authorized to say, that his argument is founded upon false facts, and supported by calumny; for it does not appear, that he had any reason to call Mary Magdalen a mad woman. The incredulity of Thomas, which makes so strong against his argument, he takes no notice of, any farther than to say, that the enthusiastical visionary, who pretended to see Jesus after his resurrection, supposed that he saw the prints of the nails in his hands; and then, taking up one of Plato's arguments, who, in his dialogue upon the soul, says, that there are the images and shades of dead

* John xxi.

† Luke xxiv.

persons, which sometimes appear near their tombs; and there must be some cause to produce those shades and images; which cause can be no other than the souls of the dead, which, in the place where they then exist, are united to a subtile body, that is as fine as the light. Our author, notwithstanding the force of the testimony of the Evangelists against him, attempts to persuade his friends, that it might have been a spectre of this kind, which was taken to have been the real body of Jesus; otherwise, that it was the imaginary phantom of a distempered brain.

Again, our author's Jew proceeds at last to make one objection, which is by no means to be despised. *If Jesus, says he, would shew his divine authority and power to the world, why did not he shew himself after his resurrection to his enemies, to the judge who condemned him, and to mankind in general?*

It is true, we are told, in the history of the Evangelists, that Jesus, after his resurrection, did not shew himself in public to all mankind, as he had done before; although St. Luke says *, that he shewed himself to his disciples, "during the space of forty days, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:" And St. Paul says †, "that he was seen, after his resurrection, of Cephas, then of the rest of the Apostles, after that by above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greatest part remain unto

* Acts i. 3.

† 1 Cor. xv. 3.

" this

“ this time ; but some are fallen asleep. After
 “ that he was seen of James ; then of all the
 “ Apostles again. And last of all, he was seen of
 “ me, as of one born out of time.”—There is
 something great and marvellous in this part of the
 conduct of Jesus Christ ; and if Celsus had as
 much reason for making all the rest of his objec-
 tions, he would be worthy of the esteem of all
 those who search after truth.

I have already observed, that Jesus Christ, dur-
 ing the whole course of his life, was never fond
 of praising himself, or of making a parade of his
 great works ; or even of shewing himself too much
 in public ; but was rather desirous that mankind
 should not be surprized into the belief of his doc-
 trine, and that they should have time to deliberate,
 and to form their judgment upon his whole con-
 duct. He also forbid his disciples to tell the
 world of many surprizing things which they had
 seen and heard with him ; and particularly of what
 they saw upon the mountain, when he was trans-
 figured. And moreover, his figure was known to
 so very few people at Jerusalem, although he fre-
 quently taught publicly in the temple, that when
 Judas led the band of men, to whom he had agreed
 to deliver his Master, not one of this troop knew
 him ; and he appeared so changed, that when he
 asked them, “ Whom seek ye ? ” and received for
 answer, “ Jesus of Nazareth ; ” and, in reply, said,
 “ I am he,” they were so astonished, that “ they
 “ retired,

“retired, and fell to the ground *.” Judas himself being so surprized, that he had not the courage to approach him, and to give the signal agreed upon.

As we are taught by the Evangelists to have such an opinion of Jesus Christ, not only with regard to the Divinity which was hid within him, and which was only manifested, while he was alive, to a few persons; but also with regard to his body, the form of which he changed when and to whom he pleased; we must conclude, that all the world were not capable of seeing him in his glorious state. St. Paul tells us †, that when he saw him, he was struck blind, and could not bear the glory of his presence.

But the strongest argument that can be given for Jesus Christ's not shewing himself to the whole world after his resurrection, and which, I think, has never been answered, is that of the free agency of human beings in this life. If the Supreme Being was to compel us to obey his dictates, by thundering in our ears, by surprizing us with the sight of heavenly visions, or by using a power above what human nature was capable of supporting, we should no longer be free agents, and the whole order of nature would be overturned. When Jesus Christ came into the world, he did as much to convince the Jews, as human nature was capable of hearing and seeing:—The blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed,

* John xviii.

† Acts ix.

the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and the poor had preached to them the purest moral, and the most heavenly doctrine that had ever been taught mankind. If those obstinate people had reflected seriously upon these things, they must have said, with Nicodemus, "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."—And, if he was a teacher come from God, although he told them things which they could not exactly comprehend at that time, they ought not to have rejected him, but waited to have seen the consequences of his preaching, as this prudent Pharisee did.

So far Jesus did nothing to counteract forcibly the free agency of the human species; and we may justly presume, that this was the reason why he forbid his disciples to reveal several things, which they had seen, and heard, respecting him, particularly his transfiguration. St. Paul was chosen to be the publisher of his doctrine to the Gentile world; and, therefore, it was for a very great and particular purpose that he appeared, in a glorious manner, to this Apostle after his resurrection.—But, if Jesus had appeared in this form to the rest of mankind, merely to convince them of his Divinity, as our author has proposed, it might have been very justly observed, that he had offered violence to their free agency, as intelligent created beings, and thereby counteracted the general order of nature.

The

The miracles which Jesus Christ did were necessary to convince this hardened people, who had been accustomed to see such things, of his being a teacher come from God, as he declared himself to be, to rouse them from their lethargy, and to put them upon the examination of the nature of his doctrine, and of the things which he proposed thereby; but, according to the general order which appears to be established, by the Supreme Being, over all the human race, no more could have been done.

To conclude his extraordinary discourse, Celsus makes his Jew observe, that all his objections and observations were taken out of the history of the disciples of Jesus: *We have no occasion, says he, for any other witnesses; you refute yourselves.* And then, to finish the whole, he makes a very curious observation. *Great God of heaven! what God ever presented himself to mankind, and found them full of incredulity?*

Is it not astonishing that Celsus, who had read the history of Moses, should make a Jew demand a question of this kind?—This great prophet tells us that, although the God of heaven manifested himself so clearly to the Israelites, by all the miraculous acts which he did, through him, in Egypt, in the Red-sea, and in mount Sinai, nevertheless he found them, not only full of incredulity, but of an idolatrous obstinacy that was scarcely to be paralleled; and, when he remained on this mountain somewhat longer than he at first

proposed, they, with Aaron, “made themselves
 “a golden calf, built an altar before it, and wor-
 “shipped it, saying, These be thy Gods, O Israel,
 “which brought thee out of the land of Egypt;”
 “and thus changed their glory into the similitude
 “of an ox that eateth grass *.”—But our author,
 notwithstanding all his pretended knowledge, has
 made his Jew fall into the grossest blunders and
 absurdities, and very often to forget that he was
 a Jew.

LET us now proceed to examine, what was this
 Epicurean’s own opinion, respecting those matters,
 that several of the ancient authors, who have
 wrote against Christianity, as well as many of the
 moderns, have regarded him as the chief pillar of
 all their arguments.

After having, by the mouth of his Jew, uttered
 all kinds of calumny and falsehoods against Jesus
 Christ and his disciples, he now proceeds to at-
 tack the whole Jewish nation; whom he supposed
 to have been originally Egyptians, and to have
 revolted against their country, and despised the
 ceremonies of its religion: and then he adds, *that*
those who attached themselves to Jesus Christ, and
received him for the Messias, treated the rest of their
nation, as they had before treated the Egyptians;
from a spirit of sedition and rebellion, which is pecu-
liar to this people.

* Exod. xxxii. 4: Psalm cvi. 20.

I believe Celsus is the only author who ever wrote that the Hebrews were originally Egyptians. If this had been true, the God of heaven must have wrought a great miracle in their favour, which is not mentioned by Moses; namely, that of changing their language, as soon as they left their native country, from the Egyptian to the Hebrew: Moreover, all the Egyptian authors declare them to have been strangers, and to have been driven out of Egypt with Moses. Our author might as well have called Jesus Christ and his disciples Chineses, as to have said that they were seditious persons; because their whole doctrine is founded upon the principles of charity, peace, brotherly love, and concord:—The man who teaches, that the merciful are blessed, for they shall obtain mercy; and that the peace-makers shall be called the children of God; and acts agreeably thereto; can never be a seditious person.

The Christians, says Celsus, are of such a seditious disposition, and so fond of variety, that if all mankind would become Christians, they would endeavour to be of some other sect: For, when they first established their religion, they were very few in number, and all of one sentiment; but, when they began to multiply, they likewise began to divide themselves into different sects; each person endeavouring to form his own party, which has always been their principal design.

There is no part of the doctrine of Christianity which does not teach its followers to observe a

conduct diametrically opposite to what Celsus has described; and yet this author, and others, who have copied his works, have made this seditious conduct, as they are pleased to call it, a capital charge against the primitive Christians; although not only the ecclesiastical, but the civil history of those days, declare, that the bloody persecutions and opposition, which those people suffered, were such as had never before been seen in the world; and could not be equalled, but by their patience, resignation, and purity of manners.—It is true, that an extraordinary zeal for what they perceived to be the truth, led several of the primitive Christians, and even some of the Apostles themselves, into little divisions, respecting their ceremonies, but they were such as did not affect the principles of their religion:—The first of which was between the converted Jews and the Gentiles; whether the latter, who had renounced their idolatrous superstitions, to embrace Christianity, should be obliged to observe the ceremonies of the former; particularly the circumcision, and the abstaining from impure meats*; but this was soon settled by a council at Jerusalem. Afterwards St. Paul tells us, that there were some of the Sadducees, who, following the Epicurean doctrines, had been of the opinion, that there was no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit: And, although they had embraced Christianity, their former prejudices had brought them into errors respecting the resur-

* Acts xv. 2.

rection,

rection, which this great Apostle attempted to correct *; and afterwards he gives a very particular caution to Timothy, and, through him, to the Christians in general, “to avoid profane and “vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called; which some professing have erred “concerning the faith †.”—This Apostle, when he attempted to correct the Christians, respecting the abuses which they had introduced, in eating the Lord’s Supper, tells them also, that there were divisions and heresies among them; which he thought were not unnecessary, to the end that those among them who were approved might be made manifest. And, indeed, as human nature is thus frail, and subject to errors, it must always be the case: But this cannot be regarded as a reproach upon the doctrine of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Our author and his followers would have thought it very extraordinary, if the Christians had condemned the doctrine of Socrates, because his followers had divided it into so many different branches; or that of Plato, because Aristotle, after twenty years study, had abandoned it, and not only declared against the immortality of the soul, which was a part of the doctrine that his master taught, but even treated his ideas in general as the effects of a distempered brain.—But because Socrates and Plato had ungrateful scholars, whose pride and vanity overcame their

* 1 Cor. xv. 12, &c.

† 1 Timothy vi. 20.

reason, should we from thence condemn the principles of those learned and modest philosophers?

Celsus, in the next place, proceeds to compare the Christian religion with that of the Egyptians; and observes that, *when we approach their temples, we discover nothing there that is worthy of admiration; no great and sumptuous buildings, no magnificent porticos, no rich balustrades, no sacred woods, which fill the soul with respect, nor any ceremonies full of devotion and mystery: But, when we come to the interior part thereof, we only find there a cat, an ape, a crocodile, a buck, or a dog, as the object of their adoration.*

This author has told the truth, respecting the Egyptians, who, notwithstanding all their pretended knowledge and science, could not discover, that they were rendering to the most vile of all animals, that worship and adoration which was due only to the Creator. But how he could compare this debasing of human nature, with the doctrine, and form of worship, of the Christians, I am at a loss to discover; and should have concluded, that it was a page of some other book which he had introduced in this place, by mistake, if he had not continued his discourse, by comparing Jesus Christ to Castor and Pollux, to Hercules, to Bacchus, to Esculapius and others, *who, says he, according to the Grecian fables, from men are become gods; however, although they did many great actions, for the benefit of mankind, we cannot resolve*
within

within ourselves to regard them as real gods, because we know that they were men: But you speak of Jesus, as of a God, and believe that your religion obliges you to do it, notwithstanding you know that he had a mortal body.

No other answer is necessary to this accusation, than that those who are the admirers of Celsus would read the histories of those Grecian demigods, and see whether our author, according to his ideas of the Divinity, if we may form a judgment thereof from his works, had any reason to compare them to Jesus Christ; and whether there was any resemblance between the conduct of the former, and that of the latter, taking each from their respective histories.

After this, our author proceeds to cast some reflections upon the primitive Christians, and to attack indirectly the writings of St. Paul: *Their principal maxims are, says he, to banish from their society all those who have any knowledge, any wisdom, or any prudence; which, according to their religion, are bad qualities; but they receive freely all kinds of ignorant and disorderly persons, and fools: And, acknowledging that this class of people are worthy of their God, they hereby confess, that they will not, and they cannot, convert but such persons as are without judgment, and without virtue, women, children, and slaves.*

All the authors, who have wrote impartially of the primitive Christians, declare them to have been very decent and reserved in their manners,
and

and by no means such as Celsus has declared them to be. That great numbers of vile and profligate wretches were converted to Christianity, and afterwards became not only examples of morality, but faithful worshippers of the God of heaven, is an undoubted fact: And if our author, or his followers, think with the Jews, that the Christian religion was disgraced by this means, I must beg leave to say, that they were intelligent beings of the human race, as well as the wisest philosopher, and “that there is joy in heaven over one sinner
 “that repenteth, more than over ninety and
 “nine just persons who need no repentance.”—When St. Paul enumerates the particular graces of God *, he places the gift of wisdom in the first rank, and afterwards the gift of science, as inferior. And when this great Apostle describes the qualifications that a bishop, or doctor of the church, should have, he says, “That he may be
 “able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort, and
 “to convince, the gainsayers; and, by his
 “wisdom, to stop the mouths of those unruly
 “and vain talkers, who employ themselves in
 “counting of fables, to deceive mankind †.” And moreover this Apostle says, “Consider, brethren, your calling, how that not many wise
 “men after the flesh, not many mighty, not
 “many nobles are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things, according to the world,
 “to confound their wisdom; and God hath cho-

* 1 Corinth. xii. 8, 9.

† Titus i. 9, &c.

“ sen the weak things, according to the world, to
 “ confound the things which are mighty ; and
 “ the base things, according to the world, and
 “ the things which are despised, hath God cho-
 “ sen ; that no flesh should glory in his pre-
 “ sence *.”

I have already observed, that this Apostle, speaking of the wisdom of this world, meant the ridiculous systems of the Stoics, of the Epicureans, and of others, who called themselves philosophers, which so much prevailed in those days. The wisdom of the Egyptians, so extolled by Celsus, taught them to pay that adoration and worship to cats, dogs, crocodiles, and the most vile of all animals, which they owed only to their Creator ; and the wisdom and philosophy of those, who pretended to be the most learned of all the Greeks, led them to deny the providence of God ; to deny that the soul was immortal ; to laugh at all the wise and moral precepts of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato ; and to debase our nature so much, as to place the human race upon the same footing with the wild beasts, birds, and fishes.— But what shall we say of the materialists of our days, who, after having been instructed in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which points out the attributes of the Supreme Being, the care of his providence, the excellency of human nature, the rewards, or punishments, which every human being is capable of receiving, and which he must

* 1 Corinth. i. 26, &c.

receive,

receive, in an immortal state; and the desire which the Creator has expressed that every one of his created, free, and intelligent beings, should be happy; I say, who, after having been instructed in all these matters, founded upon incontestable authority, have again attempted to revive the Epicurean and Stoician doctrines, have dared to assert, that the soul is mortal, and dies with the body; and, in consequence of their refined reasoning, have positively asserted, with the Greeks before mentioned, That a human being is no more, in the general scale of things, than an elephant, a rat, a bird, or a fish?—This is the kind of wisdom which St. Paul declares to be foolishness before God, which debases human nature, which is absolutely contrary to human reason, and which is founded only upon the imagination of proud, vain, and distempered brains, and upon the extravagant conceits of those who, although ignorant of the motions of their own bodies, and of the physical properties of matter, which come under the inspection of their senses, are so audacious as to pretend to develop all the mysteries of the Supreme Being; and who, although little less than angels, in one sense, would place themselves above them; and, in another, would so debase their nature, as to make themselves equal to the most vile animals.

Celsus proceeds, in the next place, to compare the Christian preachers, of those days, to a quack-doctor, who promises to cure all his patients, but will

not

not suffer them to call in any regular bred physicians, lest they should discover his ignorance.—But this author should have told us, who were the regular physicians that he would have called in:—Perhaps he meant the Egyptian doctors, whom he thought the wisest and most learned men upon earth; and whose refined knowledge and science, as I have just now observed, led them to reject the great God of heaven, and to worship and adore, in a most mysterious manner, the most vile of all animals;—or the Epicureans, who denied the providence of God, and made the sovereign good consist in voluptuousness;—or the Peripateticians, who declared that there is no connection between the Supreme Being and mankind, and that his providence does not extend to us;—or the Stoicians, who taught that God was a corruptible Being, and invested with a material body, which is subject to an infinity of changes and alterations, and which is susceptible of every form; they likewise maintained that every thing, except God, would, one day, perish, and be destroyed:—Either of those would give but poor consolation to an intelligent and rational being, who, at the hour of death, was looking forward into that immortal state, through which we must all pass.—If our author had been now upon earth, perhaps he would have regarded the Materialists as the regular physicians, who should be consulted in those cases; because they declare that the soul is nothing more than a breath of air, which leaves the body at
the

the hour of death, and is absorbed by the circumambient atmosphere; and that we are no more than the brute animals: like them we come from dust, and like them we must thereunto return, never more to be disunited.

Again, our author, continuing his discourse, compares those *preachers to drunkards, who would persuade other drunkards, that sober persons would likewise become drunk; and, having to do with disciples who are not better instructed than themselves, they would make the most wise and clear-sighted persons upon earth appear blind and fools.*—I am well persuaded, that no person, who has common sense and reflection, and who has read the New Testament with impartiality, will join Celsus in this opinion: I would ask the admirers of this author, Which of the Evangelists, or of the Apostles, or of the ancient fathers of the church, resembles a drunkard; or shews the disorder of a mind drunk with vice?—On the contrary, this accusation might be justly applied to all those who rendered the same worship and adoration to inanimate beings, and vile animals, as was due only to the Supreme Being; to those who imagine that they can honour the true God, by the works of some vile artizan; to those who, although they are intelligent beings, would debase their own nature, and place themselves upon a footing with the worms and reptiles; and to those who, like a modern French critic, would endeavour to persuade mankind that the sovereign good consisted

sifted in turning all things into ridicule, and in uttering all kinds of calumny against others, who were of a different way of thinking, and who would not adopt their chimerical and ill-founded systems. What a scene of terror must open to those wretches, especially to such as have been informed of the great attributes of the Supreme Being, and of his bounty towards mankind, when they are about to quit the stage of life, and to behold an angry God, whose mercies they have turned into ridicule, and whose justice they have despised ! I think they may be justly compared to a man of fortune, who being fond of play, risks his whole substance against a common cheat, who has nothing to lose : If this man wins, he cannot expect to receive any thing ; but if he loses, he is totally ruined. So those pretended philosophers, who would insult the rest of mankind, and turn those things which the latter hold sacred into ridicule, hazard their eternal salvation against nothing ; for, contrary to their expectations, should the Christian doctrines prove true, they must be eternally miserable ; and, if they should not be so, they cannot gain any thing. The Christian, on the other hand, who finds the impulses of that innate voice of nature, which faintly, but continually, speaks within him, if not suffocated by the violence of his passions, enlivened and illustrated, and his own imperfect ideas, of the justice, mercy, and transcendent goodness, of the Supreme Being, clearly explained, by the doctrine of Jesus Christ,

Christ, risks nothing, by faithfully adhering to the principles of this doctrine, and putting his whole confidence in the promises of God; because, as he has all the reason in the world to believe that they are true, by so doing he is sure of inheriting eternal salvation; but if they should not be true, he is still upon a footing with the philosophers before mentioned.

It will be seen, from what Celsus further observes, respecting the nature of the Deity, and of his government, that he is one of the principal pillars upon which our modern Materialists found their chief arguments; although, as it will be presently seen, his reasoning is not even worthy of a school-boy. *Was it because that God was not known enough to mankind, says this author, and found, from thence, that something was wanting to compleat his happiness, that he would make himself more known to them, and thereby discover the faithful from the incredulous? This would be giving a very extraordinary account of the Deity, and accusing him of a low and unworthy ambition, like one of those who are suddenly become rich, and who take pleasure in shewing their riches.*

The Christians, on the other hand, say, that God, not being known to the wicked, would make himself known unto them, not because he would thereby increase his happiness, but, on the contrary, because they cease to be unhappy when they are made acquainted with his universal love and benevolence.—He created them free and intelligent

ligent beings; but, when he saw that, from the frailty of their nature, and the irregularities of their passions, they stifled the admonitions and remonstrances of that faithful monitor, which he placed in each individual being respectively, and afterwards fell into all kinds of vice and wickedness, he sent his Christ, or his Word, unto them, not to discover the faithful from the incredulous, but to rouse them from their lethargy, to explain again his will to them, to deliver the faithful, and those who acknowledged his divine power and goodness, from all kinds of evil, and not to give any pretence to the incredulous to excuse themselves, that they had not been taught the things which they ought to have believed. Hence therefore, it was not to discover his majesty and his glory, that God discovered himself to mankind, as Celsus has observed, but to give his free and intelligent created beings the opportunity of knowing his infinite mercy and goodness, and the desire which he had that they should all participate of his eternal happiness.

Celsus proceeds to tell us, that, *if we had studied in the school of nature, we should from thence have learnt the true system of the creation; that God made nothing which is mortal, and that he created only immortal beings; and that it was by them that the mortal beings were afterwards made.* Thus, says he, *the soul is the work of God; but the body is of another order; and, in this respect, there is no difference between the body of a rat, a worm, or a frog, and that*

of a man ; for the matter of the one is the same as that of the others ; they are all equally corruptible : So that the idea of the pretended Messias, touching the resurrection of the body, is a vain foolish thing, and the production of ignorance.

It is true, this was the opinion of a great number of the Greek philosophers ; but I cannot discover one solid reason which they gave in support of this doctrine. The disciples of Zeno, who were much regarded in those days, were of the contrary opinion : And surely, if we study in the school of nature, as our author observes, we shall find innumerable and powerful reasons, to contradict this absurd conceit of those philosophers, and to corroborate the assertions of Jesus Christ, respecting the omnipotency and omniscieny of the Supreme Being, and the care which he has over all his creatures. By casting our eyes over the brute creation, we find among them such an admirable order and regularity, such a justness and proportion in all their motions, such infinite beauties and exactitude, in all their parts ; the least of which are above the comprehension of the greatest of those philosophers ; and therefore I can see no manner of reason why they should declare, that these are not the production of the Sovereign Intelligence : Moreover, the internal principle, divested of imagination, which is contained in every species of the almost infinite number of plants, and which diversifies them so regularly upon the whole face of the earth, not only to supply the wants of

mankind,

mankind, but also for the use of those animals, which, notwithstanding what they may be otherwise, render service to the human species : I say, when we take all these things into consideration, are we not led to demand more solid reasons of those philosophers, than their simple affirmation, to shew us, that it is was not a perfect Intelligence which placed so many different qualities in the matter of the animals, and of plants ?—When we compare the Mosaic history of the creation with the works of nature, which every moment present themselves to our view, and which we are in a situation to examine physically, we see the latter not only corroborating, but, as it were, explaining the former. But when, agreeable to the opinion of those philosophers, we have once laid it down, that our bodies were created by inferior gods, and that the soul only is the work of the great God of heaven ; how can we, after a division of this importance, reconcile that wonderful harmony, that reigns throughout all nature in general, and through the different parts of every created being in particular, and even through the atoms that compose every plant which groweth upon the face of the earth, with that chaos which must have been occasioned in the creation by the workings of a number of independent gods, each of which having his proper task or employment assigned him ?—We have the greatest reason to think, that, if those philosophers had well examined this point, even with a physical at-

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tention,

tention, they would have discovered, that this great system of nature could only have been the work of one God, who created all these beings, and destined each of them to its proper end and use; or, if they had not made this discovery, they would at least have offered some solid arguments in their defence, against those who maintain that the corruptibility of material beings is a thing very indifferent in its nature; and that there is no absurdity in saying that this world, which is composed of parts of a different nature, is the work of one great Being, who so ordered it, that every part thereof should harmoniously concur in the common good of the whole.

The second part of our author's argument, namely, that the body of a man is of the same nature with that of a rat, of a worm, or of a frog, because the matter of the one is the same as the matter of the other, they being all equally corruptible, is not at all like the argument of a person who had any idea of physics. The Greeks supposed the sun, moon, planets, and all the heavenly bodies, to be so many divinities, notwithstanding they are evidently material bodies, and from their nature subject to corruption; and if we were to admit our author's reasoning, and adopt the ideas of his countrymen respecting the gods, we should say that the plants, fishes, and wild beasts, were likewise so many divinities, because they are equally material bodies, and from their nature subject to corruption:—The
matter

matter of all kinds of bodies being originally the same, but is susceptible of all the qualities which the Creator shall imprint upon it; so that when it is the will of God, a certain portion of matter receives particular qualities; and again, when it is his will, he can change these qualities, and imprint others thereon, which are more noble and exquisite than the former.

Again, as it is a point capable of a physical demonstration, that mere matter cannot think; and as we find a thinking principle in all the brute animals, which is evidently not material, at least according to the ideas which we have at present of the properties of matter, I would ask the friends of our author, whether they suppose that principle to have been created by the Supreme Being or not? because this author proceeds to tell us, *that the nature of all the bodies before-mentioned, is the same, and that their matter is the same, passing and repassing through all the successive changes to which it is exposed in the world; so that, of all those things which are formed of matter, there is nothing immortal.*—If we may believe this author, in his saying that the nature of every kind of body is the same, and their matter the same, preserving its properties through all the successive changes to which it is exposed in the world, we must conclude, that matter is immortal; and yet he proceeds to tell us, that of all those things which are formed of matter, there is nothing immortal. The world, which is formed of matter,

is not an immortal being, but, of course, must be mortal, and subject to corruption, as not being the work of God. Our bodies likewise, which, according to the reasoning of our author and his friends the Materialists, are a part of this great mass of mortal matter, must die with it. But what is to become of that reasoning principle which is evidently in every human being, which we call the soul, and which is generally admitted to be the work of God, in this state of corruption? and what is to become of that thinking principle we find in all the brute animals, and which is by no means a property of mere matter?—Celsus has not given any answer to these questions; but our modern Materialists declare, that the soul dies with the body; or rather, as it is nothing more, according to their system, than a breath of air, when it quits the body, it is absorbed by the circumambient atmosphere, as a vapour that arises out of the earth.—If we were to judge from the pride, presumption, self-sufficiency, and that species of refined reasoning which are peculiar to our philosophers, who would develop all the mysteries of the Supreme Being, we should conclude the human species to be little less than gods; but, on the other hand, when we regard the doctrine of those pretended reasoners, we find that we are actually no more in the general scale of things than the most vile animals; and from the nobleness of our nature, ten times more unhappy than they.

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Our author now proceeds, in a very brief manner, to define the nature of evil ; although it is a question which has exercised all the reasoning of the greatest philosophers, of which there are scarcely two who coincide in their opinions thereon. *There never was, and there never will be, more or less evil in the world than there is at present. The nature of the universe is always the same, and produces at all times the same quantity of evil.*

The ancient philosophers were, in general, of a different opinion with Celsus, respecting this matter, that there never was either more or less vice in the world at one time than at another. They were of the contrary opinion, and their opinion seems to be founded upon historical facts. In the early ages of the world, the abandoned women never prostituted themselves but out of the towns, and under a mask ; afterwards, when they lost all sense of shame, they threw off the mask, but they were still forbid by the laws to enter into the towns : however, when vice and corruption increased, they were permitted to enter into the towns ; and at length were even tolerated there by the laws, to prevent more vicious and unnatural practices. When the Christian religion was preached upon earth, the immorality of mankind was greatly corrected in all those parts of the world where this doctrine appeared ; but in after-ages, even in our days, vice and debauchery have shewn themselves again in very strong and lively colours. There are actually, at this time, many

great cities and towns in the Christian world, where the civil magistrates are obliged to tolerate, and even to provide, a certain number of common prostitutes, in proportion to the number of the inhabitants of their respective towns, to prevent a species of vice much more unnatural and detestable; but even this does not effectually answer the end: We here see fathers and mothers offering their own children as prostitutes, and husbands hiring out their wives as they would their horses; practices which were scarcely ever known in those countries, since Jesus Christ appeared upon earth, till within these two or three ages past. This has likewise been proposed as a reason, by the enemies of Christianity, to prove the insufficiency of the Christian doctrines to correct the vices of mankind; but, I think, very unjustly; because it is an undoubted fact, that the Christian religion has not only been the instrument whereby the greatest part of the inhabitants of the known world have been drawn out of a scene of the grossest idolatry, and brought to the knowledge of the true God; but it has everywhere spread the precepts of the purest morality that was ever taught upon earth; and if mankind fall again into those horrid scenes of vice and irregularity which corrupted the heathen world, they cannot be said to do it, in a great measure, through ignorance, as did the Gentiles; and as being free agents, and the fault lying wholly

wholly within themselves, no just excuse can be offered in their behalf.

It is not easy, says Celsus, for a man to know the origin of evil, except he is a philosopher. But it is sufficient to inform the commonalty of mankind, that God is not the author of evil, which is attached only to matter, and thereby becomes the lot of mortal and corruptible beings; and therefore, as these beings have turned, and will always turn in the same circle, it is necessary, according to the regular and unchangeable order of revolutions, that that which has been, that which is, and that which will be, should be always the same thing.

We shall be led very soon to discover the origin from which our modern Materialists have drawn all their principal arguments. Our author would from hence insinuate, that a philosopher may easily discover the origin of evil, which will be extremely difficult to any other man. The Materialists have likewise adopted the same opinion, and, with our author, suppose that they are the only persons who are capable of forming a just idea of this matter: but they must not take it amiss, if I tell them, that if they adhere strictly to their principles of philosophy, they will find themselves more bewildered and in the dark, respecting this subject, than were the ancient Scythians, whose knowledge of those matters they hold in such contempt. It is impossible for any human being to know perfectly the nature and origin of evil, how it is formed, and how it is destroyed,

destroyed, except the Supreme Being reveals it to him. It is undoubtedly a great evil not to know God, and still a greater not to know how to adore him, agreeable to the rules of true piety. According to our author's own ideas, there were great numbers of the ancient philosophers who knew not God; and this was the reason why they fell into such a variety of different sects and opinions. No person can know the origin of evil who knows not God, and who is not informed of the nature of the devil and of his angels, of what they were before they became the enemies of the human race, and for what cause the latter followed the former in his revolt. To know the origin of evil, we should know exactly what are these demons: We should know that they are not the work of God, as demons, but they are so only as being free agents, and as being intelligent creatures: We should know how they arrived to this point, that their freedom and intelligence gave them the nature of demons: And if there is any question which merits a serious examination, and which is difficult to be comprehended by man in his present state, it is that which regards the origin of evil, notwithstanding what our author and his followers may say to the contrary.—I agree with our author, that evil does not come from God; but must totally differ from him, in thinking that evil is attached to matter, because it is from the active and intelligent principle that is within us, that we must search
after

after the cause of all our vices, and discover the source of all our real evils.

The second part of our author's proposition, namely, that all things turn in the same circle, and that, according to the unchangeable order of things, what was, is, and will always be the same, cannot be true; for if that had been the case, we should be no longer free agents. If it was absolutely fixed that, in this circle, where all mortal and corruptible beings turn, that which has been, that which is, and that which will be, will always continue the same, according to the unchangeable order of its revolutions, the Supreme Being could never justly charge us with having merited either punishment or reward.—However, our author has not carried this point so far as did the Stoicians, who declared, that not only mortal and corruptible beings, but also immortal beings, and even the gods themselves, by turning in this unchangeable order of the revolutions, and by undergoing the different purifications by fire, through which the whole universe, at different periods, must pass, would continue for ever the same, from the beginning to the end.—It is true, some of this sect of philosophers endeavoured to soften, in a certain degree, the absurdity of this proposition, by observing, that the persons who came into the world, in the course of one revolution, resembled those of the preceding revolutions in some particulars only; so that it will not be Celsus himself, who will come again into the world, but a man who

who resembles Celsus; who will attempt to reason without facts, who will call truth falsehood, and the grossest calumny wit and humour. The Stoicians of our days are so stedfast in this opinion, that notwithstanding the difference of climate, the difference of education, and the great change in the manners and customs of the age, they see the spirit of our author revived in Voltaire.

The ancient Celsus proceeds to inform us, *That the empire of the world was never given to man; but that all things formed and destroyed themselves for the common good of the universe; and changed themselves the one into the other, according to the revolutions before mentioned.*

I have already proved, that the idea which our author had of the *revolutions before mentioned*, was absurd in itself. When God created the heavens and the earth, he certainly did not create any thing which was not highly finished, and in the greatest perfection; yet nevertheless, as he created great numbers of free and intelligent beings, it appears, that he was obliged to use a means to correct those particulars who fell into vice; and even to purge the whole earth, when it became corrupted thereby. But this did not arise from any imperfection in the original creation; it was the effect of the freedom and intelligence which his created beings enjoyed. And as a prudent husbandman occupies himself in different manners to cultivate the earth, and to gather the fruits thereof,

thereof, according to the different seasons of the year, so does God dispose of a number of centuries, as of so many years or days, doing in each what is necessary for the well-governing of the universe; for as it is he alone who knows what is necessary for this great purpose, it is he alone who is capable of applying such timely succours.

Again, Celsus proceeds to ask the Christians, *Whether it is not ridiculous to suppose, that a man, who was irritated against the Jews, should have totally destroyed them, both great and small, and have taken their capital, and reduced it to ashes; and all this as the effect of the wrath, the fury, and the threatenings of the great God of whom you speak, because that this nation ill-treated his Son, whom he sent into the world for the benefit of mankind?*

But if the Jews, notwithstanding they were informed that Jesus was the Christ, of whose coming their prophets had foretold, and notwithstanding they had seen him do such mighty works as were never before done by mortal man, not only put him to the most ignominious death, although the Roman governor, his judge, repeatedly declared that he found no fault in him, and requested that his blood should be on them, and on their children, but also, after they were informed by their own servants, that he was risen again from the dead, persecuted and put to death great numbers of his disciples, who were equally innocent, with respect to the crimes with which they were charged, with their Master: I say, if those hardened obstinate

wretches continued to be thus cruel and inhuman; why should our author and his friends think it extraordinary, that their destruction should be the effect of the judgment of God upon them, whose care is extended over all his creatures, who revenges the innocent, and punishes the guilty? The judgments which the great God of heaven and earth poured down upon them, by the order of his Providence, is called, by a particular manner which they had of expressing themselves in the Hebrew language, the wrath of God.—What Jesus Christ suffered, he suffered voluntarily, as I have already observed, as being not only the sacrifice, but the intercessor for mankind: but this was by no means an excuse for the Jews, and those who treated him and his disciples with such ignominy and cruelty, notwithstanding they had no just cause of complaint against them.

Our author proceeds, in the next place, to answer the pretensions of that part of mankind who declare it was for them that the brute animals were created. *If we say, says he, that we are the masters of those animals, because we hunt them down, and afterwards eat them, the same argument may be given in their favour, as they very often destroy and eat some of us; and more particularly, when we consider that, for to take them, we are in want of arms, of nets, of the aid of many men, and of dogs; whereas, as they are armed by the hands of nature, they are always in a situation to overcome us easily, without seeking any other aid.*

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This and the following arguments appear to our modern Materialists to be uncontrovertible, and are made the ground-work of all their reasoning upon this subject. But when we consider that our reason and judgment, which have been given us by the Supreme Being for our defence, are arms infinitely superior to those which the wild beasts appear to have, we can have no cause for complaining of our situation; especially as we hereby make ourselves masters of the strongest and most savage animals, without any great difficulty, although they are much larger and stronger, with respect to the body, than ourselves. We find no difficulty in taking the elephant or the lion, notwithstanding the great bulk and strength of the former, and the extreme ferocity of the latter. We make the greatest part of the brute animals tame and useful to us, by nourishing them, and treating them with lenity: and we may easily guard ourselves against the ferocity of the others, if we will make use of our judgment. Man therefore, in consequence of the reason and intelligence which the Supreme Being has given him, is the king of all the animals; some serve him for one purpose, and others for another. The oxen, cows, and sheep serve us for food and raiment; the elephants, camels, and horses to carry our burdens; the dogs to make war upon the more savage animals; and even many of those savage animals to serve us with food and furs in times of necessity.

Afterwards

Afterwards our author, addressing himself to mankind in general, who feel within themselves how much they are exalted above the brute animals, expresses himself in the following manner. *You pretend that God has given you the power to take and kill the savage beasts: but before mankind had formed themselves into societies, built towns, invented arts, and learnt the use of arms and snares, is there not the greatest appearance, that it was mankind which were destroyed and devoured by the wild beasts; and that the former rarely, if ever, prevailed against the latter?*

As the Supreme Being, by the reason and judgment which he gave to the human race, gave them a distinguished superiority over the brute creation, there is the greatest reason to believe, that when there was only one man upon the earth, this man was sufficiently guarded against the ferocity of the savage beasts: for if God created the world, and conducts it by his Providence, it is certain that the first man, in whom was all the human race at that time, as in its source, was under the guard and protection of some more powerful beings. If our author had read Hesiod, he would have seen that it was the general opinion in those days, that men had a particular communication with the gods. "Then the men and the gods
"sate at the same table, enjoyed the same pleasures, and divided their cares." Moreover, Moses informs us, that in the early ages of the world, mankind were advised of the dangers that threatened

threatened them, by heavenly voices, by oracles, and by the interposition of angels. But Celsus, and his admirers the Materialists, were not aware, perhaps, that they contradicted the opinion of great numbers of the first class of philosophers, who have admitted the Divine Providence; and who are unanimous in declaring, that the Supreme Being has formed all things for the use of his created intelligent beings: and that, by endeavouring to overturn the doctrine of Christianity, they would likewise destroy all the well-established principles of philosophy which have been adopted by mankind.—However, our author and his followers seem to disregard totally this matter.—The former continues to add, *that if mankind pretend to have any advantage over the other animals, because they build towns, make laws, and have magistrates and commanders, this argument will not avail them; for the bees and the ants are in the same situation. The bees have their queen; and there are some among them who command, and others who obey: they make war, gain battles, and use the rights of conquerors; they have towns and bourgs; they work and repose themselves by turns; they execute justice against those that are lazy and disorderly, whom they punish with death, or by driving them out of their society.*

This argument has been often copied and commented upon by the Materialists; and is regarded as unanswerable. But if those pretended philosophers are so little informed in the operations of nature, that they can see no difference between a

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work that is premeditated, planned, variegated, and carried into execution, by the light of reason, and another that is formed only by a limited movement of nature, which is commonly called instinct, they must not take it amiss, if I endeavour to point out the difference. The bees and the ants, 'tis true, appear to have some order and regularity in their respective governments and societies; and as nature has so ordered it, that the former should be fed by the finest and most balsamic parts of the vegetable creation, which are not to be gathered at all seasons of the year, it becomes absolutely necessary, that a sufficient provision thereof should be laid up in the favourable season, for the use of the rest of the year. Moreover, the delicacy of their organs is such as makes it necessary for them to guard themselves against the inclemency and changes of the atmosphere, as well as against the other animals which are their enemies. Hence, therefore, the preservation of their species obliges those little delicate animals, not only to form particular works, to lay up in summer a provision for the winter, and to secure themselves, as well from the inclemencies of the atmosphere, as from their common enemies; but also, as this task is too great for a few individuals, to form themselves into troops or societies, and to observe particular regulations, for the aid and assistance of each other. But when we regard the works of those animals, in Tartary, in Africa, in America, or in any other part of the earth, we find

find them always and exactly the same; and there is great reason to think, have continued so since the beginning of the world. Many other species of animals, likewise, provide against the inclemencies of the winter; and all take particular pains to preserve themselves and their young against their common enemies. On the other hand, we find the human species varying their habitations, not only for use, but for elegance, in ten thousand different forms: all of which being premeditated, and regularly planned, and each family and society forming a particular government, and distinct regulations to themselves, which they alter or change entirely as circumstances require; they herein shew a certain intelligence which is not to be found in any of the brute animals. The combining of ideas, and varying them according to particular circumstances, is a distinguishing characteristic of the human species. The brute animals shew a certain sagacity, and such a degree of knowledge as is necessary for their immediate preservation, and for the preservation of their species: but if we give one of these animals all the instruction and information in our power, we cannot discover that he has either reason, judgment, or any of those characteristics which dignify the human species. It is true, he will endeavour to imitate our motions, when we set him thereon by force, just as does an automaton, when we set him in motion. But, on the contrary, when we take a black man from Africa, a savage from

America, or a Tartar, and instruct him in the arts and sciences, we shall find him equally intelligent with one of us who has had the same instruction; and, consequently, this argument of Celsus, which has been so powerfully supported by all the Materialists, is founded upon false facts, and must fall of itself.

Again, our author, although he discovers in all his works an ambition which would soar to the heavens, and which would develop all the secrets of the Divinity, proceeds to offer other reasons, to debase mankind in general, and to render them equal to the beasts:—*If, says he, mankind should plume themselves upon the knowledge which they have of the secrets of magic, the serpents and the eagles know more of this science than they; because the latter have many preservatives against poisons, and against disorders; and they know the virtue of certain stones for the cure of their young; which mankind hold in so much esteem, that when they find them, they imagine they have found a treasure.*

Our author has not, in any part of his book, expressed himself so little like a philosopher as in this argument; and I believe his friends the Materialists, notwithstanding the great veneration they have for his writings, will not adopt his opinion respecting this matter. He must have been extremely ignorant of the nature of medicine, as it was known in those days, to suppose that the cures which were done thereby, were done by the secrets of magic. He would attempt to develop all the secrets

secrets of the Supreme Being, and we learn from hence, that he was totally ignorant of the common operations of natural bodies, the one upon the other. He had learnt from tradition, that serpents made use of fennel to quicken their sight, and to make their bodies more supple and active; but, perhaps, he had not been informed, that they did this by a simple impulse of nature, peculiar to them for this purpose, and not by the light of reason: whereas, when mankind make use of this herb for the same purpose, it is not, as the serpents do, by a blind impulse of nature, but partly by experience, and partly by reasoning *a priori* therefrom, according to the particular laws of matter and motion. The same observation may be made respecting the eagles; which, by the natural instinct, bring a certain stone into their nest for the cure of their young. There are many other preservatives which are known to the brute animals against their diseases: but does it follow from thence, that they are taught by reason, and not by the impulse of nature? If it was by reason, why would the serpents, the eagles, and other animals, respectively make use of the same thing; and each species confine themselves always to one and the same remedy? This is the fact: and therefore it is evident, that it is neither reason nor judgment which conducts them therein; but that natural instinct which is the effect of the intelligence that the Supreme Being originally gave their respective species for their preservation.

But to push this matter to the utmost, Celsus, in a long discourse, endeavours to prove, that mankind, although they attempt to know the Divinity, ought not from thence to pretend to be more than the other mortal beings, because that, among the brute animals, there are many which have a clear and distinct idea of this matter; whereas the greatest philosophers of Greece, and elsewhere, have fallen into a variety of disputes thereon. *If, says he, it is pretended that man has a superiority over the other animals, because he is capable of knowing the Divinity, and of receiving an idea and impression of him; let it be known, that there are many of the brute animals which can justly attribute the same advantage to themselves. For, is there any thing more divine than to foresee, and to foretell, the events that will happen in life? And in this particular, the brute animals, and the birds especially, have greatly the advantage of men; as the art of divining does not consist in any thing else but to understand what these animals teach the diviners. The birds then, and the other animals proper for divination, to which God discovers future events, shew them to us by signs, and by symbols; which is a certain proof, that they have naturally a greater and a closer connection with the Divinity than we have; and that they have more knowledge, and are more beloved by God than we are. Moreover, the most wise and intelligent men observe, that these animals communicate with each other in a more noble and holy manner than we do it; as those men pretend to understand their language; and indeed they*

they make it clearly appear, that they have such a knowledge, because they advise us, that the birds say, they will go to such a place, and that they will do such a thing, which is verified by their going to this place, or by their doing this thing. With regard to the elephant, there is no mortal being which keeps more religiously his promises, nor which is more faithful towards God; which cannot, without doubt, arise from any other cause but from his having a particular knowledge of the Divinity.

We have here a particular argument of this celebrated author, upon whose assertions our modern Materialists, and those who would endeavour to turn every thing sacred and serious into ridicule, have built a principal part of their reasoning. He advances several things with boldness, and reasons upon them as if they were real facts, when he must have known, that even the principal philosophers of his days contradicted them. It was always a matter of dispute, not only among the Greeks, but also among the learned of other nations; both the one and the other pretending to have a knowledge of the art of divination, by the means of birds and of other animals, and thereby foretelling of events: I say, it was a matter of dispute; first, whether there was really such an art or not? secondly, those who were of opinion that there was such an art, disputed upon the cause of those effects, which served as the foundation of it; some being of the opinion, that there were certain gods, or certain demons, who had a foreknowledge of things,

and produced this difference that was remarked in the flight or in the singing of birds, and in the motions of other animals. Others again asserted, that these animals were of a more exalted order than the human species, and consequently, were capable of receiving of these lights: although even these philosophers confessed that the appearances often proved the contrary. Our author, therefore, who pretends to prove, that the brute animals have more knowledge, and something more divine in them than mankind, because they foretel events, should have first proved, that this art of foretelling events is a real thing; afterwards have refuted solidly the reasons of those who supported, that this art had no foundation; and as well of those who pretended, that it was either the gods or the demons who imprinted on the animals the different motions which those pretended diviners study; and, lastly, have established, by solid arguments, his opinion respecting these divine qualities of the thinking principle of the beasts.— Then, seeing that he had treated this important matter philosophically, it would have been an object worthy of our attention to have given an answer to his arguments, and to have proved the falsity of what he has asserted, and what his followers still continue to assert, *That the brute animals have more knowledge than the human species; and that the ideas which they have of the Divinity, are more pure and exalted than ours are.* But as he has not proved his assertions; and as we know that

that the latter, respecting the elephant, is an absolute falsity, I shall only observe, that this extraordinary writer, who calls himself a philosopher, as a man, has ceded the first place to the beasts, and placed himself below them, even more than did his admired friends the Egyptian doctors, who adored these beasts mysteriously, as if they were gods. If the birds and other beasts, for instance, which were used for the pretended art of divination, had any thing divine in them, and which gave them a particular knowledge of future events, it might be supposed that they would the sooner have a knowledge of such as regarded themselves, and avoided flying into those places where mankind had laid nets or wires to take them, or where they were liable to be killed by the shots of the fowler. If the eagles, in particular, could foresee that the serpents would mount up to their nests to devour their young, or that men would carry them off for their diversion, or for other purposes, they would never build their nests in such places. Upon the whole; the more we examine into the nature of Celsus's argument, the more we find it absurd upon the face of it.

But this author, as if he intended to push his arguments to the utmost degree of extravagance, or to be an example for all those who adopted his opinions, and wrote against the providence of God, concludes this part of his discourse with telling his followers, *That they ought not to believe, that these things were made for man, any more than for the lion,*
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for the eagle, or for the dolphin; that the world, which is the work of God, was created, in every respect, perfect, and that all its parts are in a just proportion the one to the other, and are not dependent the one upon the other, but all depend upon the universe; which alone is under the immediate care of the Supreme Being, which is never abandoned by his providence, and which never falls into disorder. It is ridiculous to think that God should come upon earth, to reconcile himself with mankind; who are no more the objects of his wrath, than the apes, or the rats, neither were they ever threatened by him; but every thing continues in the same rank and order, in which it was placed at the beginning.

All nature shews us, that it was for man, and for the intelligent beings, that all the other things were created; and the doctrines of this great preceptor are explained, and corroborated, by the revealed will of the Deity. When we have it from such good authority, and even from the physical as well as the moral lessons of the former, we should disregard the groundless assertions of Celsus, on account of this matter. What this author has said respecting the creation of the world, that it is the work of God, and that all its parts are in a just proportion the one to the other, may be admitted: but it is not the universe alone which is under the immediate protection of the Divine Providence, as our author supposes; all the intelligent beings, in preference to the universe, are under the immediate protection of the Deity, and are
never

never abandoned by him, any more than the universe; of which there are some parts that fall into disorder, because of the sins and irregularities of the intelligent and reasonable beings: but the Deity interposes, after a certain time, and re-establishes every thing in order. The apes, and the rats, as not being reasonable and intelligent beings, are not the objects of the wrath of God; but he lets mankind feel his justice, and his chastisements, when they neglect his laws, and fall into irregularities. However, as they are free agents, he first explains his will to them, and shews them their duty, by his Prophets, by his Son, the Word, or by some other means, to the end that they may not have any excuse to plead, if, by continuing in their wicked and unnatural practices, they receive the punishments annexed to their crimes.

Celsus, in the next place, proceeds to attack, indirectly, the writings of St. Paul, touching the resurrection of the dead, and the last judgment. *Another of the foolish imaginations of the followers of Jesus, is, says he, that, after God has lighted up the fire, like a cook, all the universe will be broiled, but they alone will not be touched by the fire; and not only those of their sect who are then living, but those also who have been dead a long time, will be seen to rise again out of the earth, with the same bodies which they formerly had, and stand like gods, unburt amidst this broiling fire. Is this not, in fact, a hope worthy of such worms? For what human soul would wish to enter again into a putrid body? Or how can a body, which*
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is entirely corrupted, retake its former nature, and recover the same disposition of parts it had when it was destroyed?—Not knowing what answer to give to these questions, they have recourse to the most absurd of all evasions, that every thing is possible to God. But God cannot do such things as are in themselves unjust; and he will not do any thing that is contrary to the order of nature. When your irregular desires fill your mind with any thing horrible in its nature, it is not to say that God can do it; as God is not the executor of our criminal fancies, nor the author of impurity and disorder; he is the director of nature, where every thing is right and just. He certainly can make the soul immortal; but we ought to regard a dead body in the same manner as we would regard a heap of dung. To immortalize a body of flesh, full of worms and corruption, is what God cannot, or will not do. For, as he is the sovereign reason of all beings, he cannot do any thing against reason, without doing it against his own justice and attributes.

This argument of Celsus has been thought inimitable by our modern Materialists, and is also a corner-stone of a great part of their reasoning: But the more we examine it with attention, the more we shall find it full of absurdities, false facts, and, I had almost said, of impertinences. He sets out with endeavouring to turn the general opinion of mankind, respecting the destruction of the world by fire, into ridicule; I say the general opinion of mankind, because this was the opinion of the greatest part of the Grecian philosophers, of the Magi,
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of the Brachmans, and of the Scythians, as well as of the Jews and of the Christians; and would make his followers believe, that his opinion alone was to be the oracle, to explain all the mysteries of the Gods. He has falsely represented what St. Paul has wrote upon the resurrection, and then attempts to reason upon his own assertions, as if they were real facts, and accuses the Christians of making the most absurd evasions, because they did not answer directly the questions which he demanded of them. *How can a body, says he, which is entirely corrupted, retake its former nature, and recover the same disposition of parts it had when it was destroyed?*—If this author had candidly examined the writings of the great Apostle before mentioned, he would have seen a full answer to his question. “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body *.”—“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body †.”—And again, with respect to those who shall be upon earth when this day shall come, this great writer says, that “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a

* 1 Corinth. xv. 36, &c. † Ibid. 42, &c.

“moment,

“ moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last
 “ trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the
 “ dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall
 “ be changed; for this corruptible must put on
 “ incorruption, and this mortal must put on im-
 “ mortality*.”

Having this clear answer of St. Paul's to the very questions which he has proposed, could it be supposed that any man, who takes upon himself the name of a philosopher, would have the assurance to misrepresent many of the facts contained in the Apostle's writings, to turn others, which he was not capable of comprehending, into ridicule, and then to accuse the Christians of having a hope that was worthy of worms, because they did not enter directly into his opinion? We may see from hence that our author, like the critic of Ferney, was one of those little sneering genius's, who, by misrepresenting of facts, with a certain vivacity, much self-sufficiency, and very little reason, would endeavour to mislead mankind, and would sacrifice every valuable consideration for a momentary applause.

The second part of this author's reasoning, namely, that as God *is the sovereign reason of all beings, he cannot do any thing against reason, without doing it against his own justice and attributes; and, moreover, that God will not do any thing against the order of nature;* is undoubtedly just and true: But we should distinguish what is, and what is not,

* 1 Corinth. xv. 51, &c.

against

against reason, and against nature. If our author means that wickedness and vice are contrary to nature, I shall certainly join with him in opinion, that God will do nothing contrary to nature; seeing that he will not do any thing that is vicious. Or, if he means that God will not do any thing which is not just, and conformable to right reason, I will likewise agree with him: But if he, or his followers, will insist, that the groundless opinions of several sects of the ancient philosophers, of our modern Materialists, and particularly of those who would debase human nature, and make us equal to, or even less than, the brute beasts, are to be regarded as right reason, because they are ornamented with some flowers of rhetoric, I must insist the contrary; and moreover add, that those opinions are in themselves absurd, and not essentially different from the fancies of a distempered brain. We may lay it down as a certain proposition, that whatever happens, conformably to the counsel and will of God, is not contrary to the order of nature; and therefore whatever God does is agreeable to the order of nature, notwithstanding it may be above the comprehension or discernment of any human being. Every modest philosopher will readily admit, that although we are intelligent and reasonable beings, our faculties are so limited, that we cannot comprehend all the physical causes and effects of material bodies: how then can we have the presumption to attempt to develop the moral causes

causes of things, and even the mysteries of the Supreme Being?

After a long discourse, which is composed of the grossest calumny, and a misrepresentation of facts, our author attacks the moral of the Evangelists, the principal part of which, he says, has been extracted from the works of the philosophers, and particularly from the writings of Plato, and reduced into a vulgar stile, to please the populace, and the most vile and miserable part of the human race; *and is much better known, and explained, by the Greeks; and without all this parade of promises, and threatenings, on the part of God, or of his Son.*

If the moral precepts of the philosophers were good in themselves, and worthy of imitation, it was certainly an act of great merit in those poor illiterate fishermen, and publicans, to extract these pearls from the heap of earth in which they were enveloped, and to place them in a conspicuous light for the benefit of mankind in general; of the ignorant as well as of the learned, of the Barbarians as well as of the Greeks; and therefore Celsus, although perhaps against his inclination, has been obliged to acknowledge the superiority of the Apostles. He must confess, tacitly, that the task which they undertook was full of humanity; and to succeed in this design, according to his ideas of things, it was necessary that they should learn to speak popularly, and in a manner proportioned to the understandings of all ranks of men, who had

had not a capacity to discover the beauties of a well-finished discourse : But there is not the least appearance that either of the Apostles, except perhaps St. Paul, had ever heard of the name of Plato, or of the Grecian philosophers ; they being all, according to the Jewish accounts, ignorant and illiterate men ; and yet, notwithstanding all that Celsus and his followers have said against them, I must beg leave to say, that their moral is such as was never before taught in the world ; and that there is a majesty, sublimity, and true persuasive reasoning in their writings, that has never been imitated by the greatest philosophers. Hear how the great Apostle before mentioned expresses himself : “ For my speech, and my
 “ preaching, was not with enticing words of
 “ man’s wisdom, but in the demonstration of the
 “ Spirit, and of power ; that your faith should
 “ not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the
 “ power of God : Howbeit we speak wisdom
 “ among them that are perfect ; but not the wisdom of this world ; for we speak the wisdom of
 “ God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom,
 “ which God ordained before the world unto
 “ our glory : As it is written, eye hath not seen,
 “ nor ear heard, neither have entered into the
 “ heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him : But God hath
 “ revealed them unto us by his Spirit ; for the
 “ Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things
 “ of God. For what man knoweth the things

“ of man, save the spirit of man which is in
 “ him? even so the things of God knoweth no
 “ man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have re-
 “ ceived not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit
 “ which is of God; that we might know the things
 “ which are freely given to us of God *.”

How infinitely inferior is the dry and studied style of Plato, to this of the Apostle, although he was one of the greatest and the most rational of all the Greek philosophers! In explaining the nature of the sovereign good, he says, *that the sovereign good is not a thing which can be expressed by words; and even cannot be acquired but by long habitude, and great assiduity; which make it shine up at length, all of a sudden, in the soul, as a great light, which we perceive when a fire first breaks out; and afterwards it nourishes, and supports itself †.*

What this great author has observed is certainly true and just, although it was comprehended by very few of his followers. There are many passages in the works of this author which far surpass most of the authors of antiquity: But what idea can we form of a great philosopher, who in many respects appears to have been inspired of God, and who wrote so admirably of the sovereign good, and yet condescended to address his prayers to Diana, as to a Divinity, and to assist in all the idolatrous ceremonies, with a solemn assembly of ignorant people? This philosopher has likewise wrote upon the nature and immortality of

* 1 Corinth. ii. 4, &c.

† Plato. Letter 7.

the soul, and upon the state to which its virtues will bring it after this life;—but, forgetting immediately these sublime things, which God had revealed to him, and confiding too much upon his vain reasoning, he suffered himself to be drawn insensibly into low and vile sentiments, and afterwards found himself plunged into the grossest ignorance, respecting the worship of God. We see this great man, who was so proud of his wisdom and knowledge, which he certainly had in a high degree, prostrating himself at the foot of an image, which is the representation of a corruptible being, to honour the Divinity: And if this was the case of this Prince of philosophers, what confidence can we place in those of the other sects who were infinitely his inferiors?—Plato was even sensible of his own weakness, in this respect; for he afterwards observes, *that the will of the Divinity is known to very few persons; because that mankind in general, full of a high and vain opinion of themselves, and despising others, suppose that all their imaginary ideas are so many facts, and that they have been the discoverers of great mysteries.* And again he expresses himself in the following manner; *If I thought that the revelations of the Divinity, or the sovereign good, could be expressed in such a manner, by words, that they might be written for the use of the people, what act could I do, in my life, that would be more glorious, than to publish writings, which would be so useful to mankind*?*

* Letter 7.

Could it be imagined that, after Plato had expressed himself so clearly upon this subject, shewn how glorious it would be to explain the divine will to mankind, but, from a diffidence which he had of his own abilities, was apprehensive it could not be done, Celsus, and his followers, should condemn the Apostles, and primitive Christians, because they actually did what Plato, from his great modesty, thought could not be done? Our author expresses himself in the following terms: *Plato, it is true, speaks of those things, but however he does not fill his discourse with vain prodigies; neither does he stop the mouth of those who would farther inform themselves upon what he promises. He does not order us to believe, before all things, and without any other examination, that such is the essence of God; that he has a Son who has such and such qualities; and that this Son himself came down from heaven to learn him.*

This miserable author, who pretended to know every thing, and who has cited several passages of Plato, has taken no notice of that part of his works, wherein he speaks of the Son of God, because he imagined that it would make against his argument. *You will have the witness of the God of the universe, the arbitrator of all things present and to come, with the Father, and the Lord of this first and sovereign cause; whom we may know clearly, as much as men, who are happy, are capable of knowing them, if we apply ourselves properly to the study of philosophy.*

philosophy *.—This philosopher expresses himself fully and clearly upon this head; and yet Celsus would endeavour to persuade his followers, that he meant just the contrary.

In fact, our author, although he pretends to be searching after the truth, appears to have nothing more in view than to calumniate the Christians, and to endeavour to turn all their ceremonies into ridicule; and, to answer this purpose, he has misrepresented the facts stated in all the books to which he has had recourse, at least in all those which are handed down to us; and then attempts to found his arguments thereon, as if they were real facts.—But his reasoning is no less absurd, than his intention was malicious and wicked; for he contradicts himself in almost every page of his book: And yet this is the author upon which Voltaire, and many others of our modern philosophers, have founded their principal arguments against the doctrine of Jesus Christ and his Apostles; regarding him as the great oracle of antiquity. If these philosophers had solidly and modestly, by proper authority and sound arguments, contradicted any facts which are stated in the *Évangelists*, their reasoning would have had some weight, and perhaps might have been instrumental in drawing mankind out of their errors: But as calumny, and not truth, appears to have been what Celsus had in view; and as a principle no less offensive seems to guide our

* Plato. Letter 6.

modern philosophers, it is to be hoped, that every well-meaning man will reject them with that contempt which they deserve.

In another part of his works, Celsus attempts to refute the prophecies, and to explain the manner of prophesying which was used, as he says, in Palestine; and of which he declares himself to be well informed. But whether this was the case, or not, we may judge from the account which he has given us thereof: *There are many kinds of prophets, who with great facility, and on any occasion whatever, either sacred or profane, make all the gestures and motions of persons inspired: Some of whom make all these gestures and motions, in the towns and in the armies, with an intention to draw the unwary over to their party, and to surprize whoever they can.—But, among all these prophets, there is not any one who may not say, as in fact they are accustomed to do,—I am God;—I am the Son of God;—or I am moved by the Spirit of God:—I came into the world, because the world was ready to perish; and you, ye sons of men, you will likewise perish, because of your iniquities: But, if you will believe in me, I will save you, and you shall see me come again, with a Divine power. Blessed will be those who shall at present obey my dictates: For all the rest of mankind, I will cast them into the flames of an eternal fire, with their towns, and their villages: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and then their repentance will be in vain: But I will preserve eternally all those who have been faithful to me. All those*
extraordinary

extraordinary expressions are accompanied with a number of strange and fanatic terms, which are entirely unknown, and of which, from their obscurity, no reasonable person can discover the sense, if they have any sense at all : But at least they furnish ignorant persons, or the first impostor that presents himself, with a pretence to apply them to all sorts of subjects, and upon all occasions, as they think proper.

This is the manner in which our author reasons, to invalidate the prophecies of the ancient Prophets, touching the coming of Jesus Christ into the world ; which has been held forth by his followers as a master-piece of rhetoric, and full of sound sense and judgment. However, it is presumed, that our author would have acted with more candour, and more like a philosopher, if he had stated the proper terms of the Prophets ; whether of those where the God of heaven is introduced, as if he spoke himself by their mouth ; whether of those where it is the Son of God who speaks ; or of those who prophesy under the name of the Holy Spirit : then, if he thought he could invalidate them, and make it appear that there was nothing divine in discourses full of motives for the conversion of sinners, of the censures which were past upon those people who lived in former ages, and of predictions of future events, he certainly would have thrown some new lights upon those matters. For it was on account of those things, in the discourses of the ancient Prophets, that their prophecies were collected and preserved

by the people of their days, to the end that posterity, by reading them, might regard them as the oracles of God ; and not only be instructed by the exhortations and remonstrances therein contained, but also by the predictions, and by the events which had been foretold by the Holy Spirit, and were afterwards seen to be fulfilled, to learn to regulate our lives by the rules of piety and devotion, which the Law and the Prophets have revealed and prescribed to us.—The Prophets proposed openly, and without any restriction, as God had ordered them, all such things as the people of their days were interested in learning immediately, and which tended to correct their manners : But for those things which were more mysterious, and more sublime, and which were above the comprehension of the generality of mankind, they proposed them under the form of allegories and parables, to the end that those who were desirous of knowing the truth, might have merit in seeking after it ; and having found it, might make a just and proper use thereof.

But to bring the matter to a closer and more certain issue, Celsus adds, *That having convinced several of those pretended prophets, which he himself saw prophesy, they confessed their weakness to him, and that they covered their ignorance only by using ambiguous words to deceive the world.* Here our author has declared a notorious falsehood, because there were no prophets in his days equal to the ancient prophets.—And if he had seen such a thing, he should

should have given us the names of those whom he saw prophesy in this manner, to the end that we might, from other authority, have discovered whether there was any foundation for what he has asserted; especially as the love of truth does not seem to have been one of his distinguishing characteristics.

But, says he, to give into your arguments, absurd as they are; suppose that the Prophets had foretold that God would be a slave, would be sick, or would die, was there an absolute necessity, that the great God should be a slave, or sick, because those Prophets had foretold it? Was there a necessity that he should die, to prove his Divinity by his death? Should not the Prophets rather have remained silent, than have prophesied evil and impiety? We should not have regarded whether a thing had been foretold or not, but whether it was good in itself, and worthy of God: for when a thing is bad in itself, if it had been foretold by all the men upon earth, it would be the greatest folly in us to believe it. I will ask, however, whether the things which have happened to Jesus are such as our piety will permit us to attribute to a God?

As this argument of our author, uncandid, and I had almost said absurd, as it is, has gained some credit among many of the unthinking part of mankind, who only examine things superficially; I will endeavour, with great deference to superior judgment, to give a satisfactory answer thereto.

As neither of the prophets prophesied that God
would

would be a slave, would be sick, or would die, we must regard this part of Celsus's proposition as false: And the question that is asked in consequence, namely, that if these things had been prophesied, was it absolutely necessary they should be accomplished, and that God should die, to prove his Divinity by his death? is of too ambiguous a nature to be answered, as it is at present stated. But after stating the facts, as they appear from the prophecies, the answer will not appear so difficult.—God the Father informed mankind at different periods, by the mouth of his Prophets, that they had disregarded his divine laws, totally rejected the dictates of that divine monitor which he had implanted in them respectively; and, as free and intelligent beings, who were answerable for their bad conduct to his almighty justice, they must receive the punishments due to their respective crimes: But, from that inexhaustible fund of goodness, mercy, and compassion, which are his darling attributes, he had determined to send his Son, or God the Word, into the world, to take upon him a human body, and in that situation to preach his divine laws more fully to the world; afterwards to let that mortal part die, as a sacrifice for the wickedness of every mortal being, so that the divine justice should be satisfied; and after three days to raise it up again, as a glorious body, to be for ever the intercessor between God and the human race; pleading his merits always in behalf of those who put their trust in him, and make

make him their sole Advocate and Redeemer.— This appears to be the sum of what the Prophets prophesied; and is what has since been fulfilled in Jesus Christ: Therefore it was not the God which died; it was only the mortal body which God the Word took up when he came upon earth, for the reasons before mentioned: so that the first part of our author's proposition, as I have already observed, is false; and the question which he states therefrom is absurd.

On examining what was prophesied by the ancient Prophets of Israel respecting Jesus Christ, with the utmost attention, I cannot conceive how an honest Tartar, a Chinese, or a Persian, or, in fact, any human being who has faculties to comprehend their meaning, could discover any thing that tended to evil or impiety therein, except the infinite goodness and mercy, which the Supreme Being has shewn to mankind, are to be regarded as such. If our modern Materialists, who strictly copy Celsus in those particulars, would endeavour, from proper authority, to disprove any fact advanced by the Prophets, or by the Evangelists; or by solid reasoning to prove the immorality or impiety of any part of their doctrine, they would do a real service to mankind. But by following, in this enlightened age, the poor reasoning, if it will even deserve that mild name, of this author, whose whole ambition appears to have been to calumniate the Christians, and to build their hopes upon a system of materiality, which may be demonstrated

monstrated physically to be false, is a conduct which will by no means entitle them to the name of philosophers, or even distinguish them from the lowest of the human race.

Our author finishes his discourse upon the Prophets, with an argument which he thought would have great weight, and which his followers have regarded as unanswerable:—*It is wonderful that the Christians never made this reflection; that, if the Prophets of the God of the Jews had prophesied, that he who should come into the world, should be the Son of the same God, it is not possible to comprehend, that the God of the Jews should order this people, by Moses their legislator, to increase their riches, to extend their empire, to people the earth, and to put all their enemies, with their wives and children, to the sword, so that all their race should be destroyed.—This, as Moses tells us, he did himself, in the fight of the whole Jewish nation: and threatened them, at the same time, that if they did not obey him, he would treat them in the same manner—I say, it is not possible to comprehend, that the Son of this same God, this man who was called the Nazarian, should have established a code of laws directly opposite thereto; declaring, that the gates of Heaven are shut against the rich, and against those who are fond of governing, of wisdom, or of glory; that you should take no more thought for laying up a quantity of provisions for yourselves, than the crows; nor inquiet yourselves about your clothing, any more than the lillies; and, if any man gives you a blow on one cheek, that you should present to him the other also.—*

also.—Which of these two has told lies, Moses, or Jesus? Or, are we to suppose that the Father, who sent Jesus into the world, forgot the orders that he had given to Moses; or that, changing his opinion, he has condemned his own laws, and given to this new Envoy instructions directly opposite to those which he gave to the ancient Jewish legislator?

As Peter, Martin, and Jack, by collecting a certain number of letters, from the different parts of their father's will, and arranging them as they thought proper, formed the words *shoulder knots*, and affirmed that they were a part of said will: so has our author, by taking a line in one place, and a line in another, from the law of Moses, and from the writings of the Evangelists, and combining them together as he thought proper, formed a charge against Moses, and against Jesus Christ, by declaring that their laws contradicted each other; and that, consequently, either one or both of them must have told lies; or that the God of the Jews was of a very changeable disposition, and his laws not worthy the attention of a philosopher. Could it have been supposed that an author, who would attempt to contradict a doctrine so well founded, and facts so well attested, as those taught by the Christians, should make use of such uncandid and unjust means to effect his purpose? According to his ideas, to understand the Scriptures, we should take a passage from one place, and another from another, and combine them as we thought proper, and take
the

the whole in a literal sense, without searching after the more sublime part. Whatever was calculated to correct the manners of the people then existing, to draw them out of idolatry, and to establish them in the worship of the true God, we find expressed in the clearest manner, by Moses, by all the rest of the Prophets, and even by Jesus Christ himself, and their laws and dictates exactly correspond with, and corroborate, each other:—But, as I have already observed, those things, which were more mysterious and sublime, were proposed under the form of parables and allegories; to the end that those who were desirous of seeking after the truth, might have a merit in so doing; and, having found it, make a proper use thereof.

When Moses was sent to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, we are told that these people were extremely obstinate and rebellious, much disposed to fall into all the idolatry and wickedness of the Canaanites, and of the Egyptians, and, consequently, considering the free agency and intelligence of human nature, required all the attention of their great legislator, and some acts of severity, to keep them in the worship of the true God, and from the abominable practices of the inhabitants of Canaan; who are represented to have been, at that time, in such a state of degeneracy and prostitution, that their wickedness had polluted the land, and so changed their nature, that they were deaf to every thing that had a tendency to good: For which reason the Supreme Being had determined

mined in the course of his providence to cut them off from the earth. Moses therefore ordered the Israelites, when he saw that the Canaanitish women had drawn many of his people into their idolatry and prostitution, and that there was no other way of correcting them, to destroy all the inhabitants of the land, both men, women, and children, and to burn their cities, that his people might not discover their wicked arts, and the instruments thereof: And, to deter the Hebrews from falling into the same practices, which he saw them much disposed to do, he threatened them with the same punishment which had been inflicted upon the Canaanites, if they did not follow the laws of the Lord their God; which laws are very just and equitable in themselves; and great mercy was always shewn to those who repented of their wickedness, and who obeyed the voice of their God.—On the contrary, when Jesus Christ came upon earth, the Jews, although they were still a wicked and obstinate people, were not in the least disposed to idolatry, nor to have any connection with their neighbours the Gentiles; and consequently there was no necessity for the same general laws of rigour that were laid down by Moses:—Moreover the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, were men of learning; and although, under the mask of hypocrisy, they practised all kinds of wickedness, yet they kept up at least an external form of religion; so that the laws of Jesus Christ were, in a great measure, calculated
for

for a different purpose, and addressed to a different kind of people to those to whom the laws of Moses were addressed.—When the Pharisees came to Jesus Christ, and asked him, “Whether it
 “was lawful for a man to put away his wife?
 “tempting him; he said unto them, What
 “did Moses command you? And they said,
 “Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement,
 “and to put her away. And Jesus answered
 “and said unto them, For your obstinacy he
 “wrote you this precept: But, from the begin-
 “ning of the creation, God made them male and
 “female.” So that we see from hence the
 pure moral, and pious institutions, which were
 preached by Jesus Christ to the Jews, would have
 had no effect upon their ungovernable and idolatrous
 ancestors, when Moses led them out of
 Egypt.

It is not so much to be wondered, that Celsus
 should exclaim so heavily against Christ’s sermon
 on the mount, wherein he particularly points out
 the care which the Supreme Being has of all his
 created intelligent beings; and that, after using
 the natural means, we should take no thought for
 the consequences, as we were under the imme-
 diate protection of his almighty providence; as
 this author, being an Epicurean, totally denied
 the providence of God.

Moses, at the time when more rigorous laws
 were necessary for leading the stubborn Israelites,
 says, “That if any mischief follow, then thou
 “shalt

“ shalt give life for life; eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, and foot for foot * :”—But Jesus Christ, preaching the doctrine of peace and love, says, “ Ye shall not resist evil; but “ whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, “ turn to him the other also † :”—And our author would from hence observe, that the God of the Evangelists is very different from the God of the Law; but, if he had read the writings of the ancient Prophets, he would have found the Prophet Jeremiah ‡ observing, “ That it is good for a “ man to bear the yoke in his youth; he sitteth “ alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath “ borne it upon him: He giveth his cheek to him “ that smiteth him; he is filled full with reproach.”—From hence it will appear that the God of the Evangelists does not establish any maxims opposite to those which were established by the Prophets; we only find the moral more pure and godlike in the former, than it is in the latter; and therefore neither Jesus, nor the Prophets, told any lies; and it was a piece of the grossest impertinence in Celsus to have accused them in this manner, without having any proper authority for so doing.

It is true, we find some small difference between the civil laws which Moses instituted for the Israelites, when he led them out of Egypt, and the pure and reformed institutions which

* Exod. xxi. 23. 24. † Matthew v. 39. ‡ Lam. iii. 27. 28. 30.

Jesus Christ established as a rule of conduct for the Christians, although there is no contradiction therein: and this difference arises only from the impossibility that the Gentiles, who were converted to Christianity, and subject to different civil governments, could conform themselves in every respect to the laws of Moses; and from the changes which were observed in the manners of the Jewish nation, as well as in their political constitution; so much rigour not being necessary at this time as was practised by Moses on transgressors of the laws.

Immediately after, our author, as if he had forgot what he had said before, observes, *that the Christians have likewise this precept, that it is not good to render evil for evil: and in this manner they express it; Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. But the same thing was taught long before Jesus appeared in the world: there is nothing peculiar to him but the vulgar expression. For Plato introduces Socrates holding the following discourse with Criton upon this subject—We must not then do any injustice either to friend or enemy. Certainly not. Neither should we even think of doing it to those from whom we have received it, seeing that, in general, we should not render evil to any person. This is likewise my opinion. But tell me, Criton, are we permitted to do evil, or are we not?—For my part, I believe we are not, Socrates.—And if others do us any injustice, is it just that we should return it, as the principal part of mankind suppose; or is it*

it not just so to do? It is not just, in my opinion; for there is no difference between doing an injustice to any person, and ill-treating him. You are certainly right; and therefore we should not do an injustice to any man; nor render it him, although he has treated us ever so ill.—These were the ideas of Socrates; and he moreover observes: Examine yourselves therefore, whether you agree with me respecting this matter, and whether we can build upon this foundation; that we are never permitted to do an injustice, even supposing that we have been provoked thereto, nor return the injuries that others have done us; or whether you are of another opinion, and will not admit this principle. These have always been my sentiments, and they are so still. These were the maxims of Plato, and of those divine men who preceded him.—And if any person will examine the affair with some attention, he will soon be convinced that Jesus and his followers have copied these, and many other maxims, from the writings of Plato; and in copying them, have destroyed all their beauty and efficacy.

This argument of our author has been strongly supported by many of the moderate Deists of our days, who pretend that all the pure moral of the Evangelists was copied from the writings of the Greek and other philosophers, although they are rather more modest than Celsus, because they have not been so violent as to assert that the Evangelists destroyed the efficacy of those noble maxims, by copying them.—When Celsus, and those who opposed the doctrine of the Evangelists, could not

attack directly the pure moral contained therein, they declared that it was long before taught by the Greek and other philosophers, and was not peculiar to Jesus Christ and his Apostles. But if this moral is good in itself, and leads mankind to do what is right and just, its nature is not changed from its being proposed by the Greek philosophers, by the Brachmans, by Moses, by the Prophets, or by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Are we to reject a thing that has been taught by the Christians, or by the Jews, because it has likewise been taught by the Greeks? especially as the fact appears to be, that the principal of the Greek philosophers borrowed the purest of their moral precepts from the writings of the ancient Israelitish Prophets.—The Greeks had a strong and elegant language wherein to express their ideas, which they ornamented with all the flowers of rhetoric; so that the same thing appears in a different manner, when it is told by them, to what it does when it is told in a simple and more natural manner by the Jews, or by the primitive Christians, at least to all those who are fond of a pompous style and the glittering tinsels of art, who will always give the preference to the Greeks; although there is not that pure majesty, sublimity, and grace, in this artificial arrangement of words, and in this affected dialect, that there is in the simple but expressive style of the ancient Jewish Prophets, which, conformable to the genius of the Hebrew language, in which their books were written,

written, has a force, beauty, and energy, which the other has not.

Celsus has cited a passage from Plato, to convince us that the Evangelists had destroyed the energy and beauty of his noble maxims, by copying them; and has at the same time cited a passage of St. Matthew, which he accuses Jesus Christ to have repeated from this philosopher's writings; but in so vulgar a manner, that it had lost all its energy. "But I say unto you, that ye
 "resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee
 "on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
 "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and
 "take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak
 "also."—Now, with great deference to the admirers of Celsus, I must beg leave to observe, that there is more expression and energy in these few words of the Evangelist, than there is in all Plato's argument. And moreover, Jesus Christ has hereby expressed his ideas, so as to make them universally useful to all mankind, and to make an impression upon their mind; which Plato has not done in his Criton; where his are not intelligible but to persons of learning, and not always to them, except they are acquainted with the Grecian systems of philosophy, and with all the critical niceties of their language. Moreover, Jesus Christ preached the sermon on the mount to a mixed multitude of rude illiterate Jews, who were totally unacquainted with all the Grecian rhetoric and flowers of language; and therefore he was

obliged to accommodate his expressions to the genius and capacity of those people : But when we find him speaking to the Pharisees, and to the learned part of their nation, we always find such a force and energy in his expressions, and such a superiority in his reasoning, that none of them could ever gain any advantage over him in controversy ; but, on the contrary, were always obliged to retire with shame.

Socrates and Plato taught their followers not to do injustice to any person, nor to render evil for evil : But Jesus Christ taught his Apostles and followers, not only to make no resistance to evil, but even to forgive all those who had offended them, as often as they repented of their bad conduct ; as they were to expect forgiveness from their heavenly Father only upon this condition. Moreover, we find this example of piety, when he was cursed, railed at, treated in the most ignominious manner, and put to the most cruel tortures by the Jews, although even his judge had declared him innocent, praying for his inhuman butchers : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” — St. Stephen likewise, and many others of the Christian martyrs, when at the hour of death, not only forgave, but even prayed for their murderers, saying, “ Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” — Will the admirers of Celsus shew us any examples of this kind in the writings of the Greek, or of any other philosophers ?

HITHERTO

HITHERTO I have taken notice only of those arguments of our author wherein his real sentiments were disguised, and which have been made the basis of all the reasoning of our modern Materialists and others against Christianity. But I shall now proceed to take notice of a few of his principal arguments, wherein his real sentiments are developed, that my readers may see the true intent of this author, and what a worthy patron our modern opponents of the Christian doctrines have adopted.

I would, in the first place, says this author, ask the Christians, Why they will not serve the demons? For, whatever is done in the universe, whether it be by one God, by the Angels, by the other demons, or by the heroes, is it not regulated by the laws of the Supreme God, although these inferior powers are established for particular employments, according as each shall be judged worthy? Is it not then just, that those who adore God, should also serve those to whom he has delegated such a power?—Perhaps it may be answered, that it is not possible, that the same man can serve many masters. But when we render honour and respect to those whom God has appointed to govern under him, how can we offend him on whom all the others depend?—Those who declare, that there is but one God, who is the Lord of all things, are impious persons, who would divide the kingdom of God, and introduce sedition therein, as if it had been divided into several parts, of which one part had one chief, and another a different chief.

I believe my readers will not expect that I should enter into a chain of arguments to disprove our author's assertions, respecting the plurality of gods, as I have only inserted this argument of his, to let them see what were the real sentiments of this author, and what he had principally in view throughout the whole scope of his work; and he would certainly have had great reason to argue in this manner, if he could have made it appear demonstratively, that those imaginary beings, which were honoured and adored by the Gentiles as gods, were really gods. But as even the enemies of Christianity are now convinced, that the ancient Grecian gods, which our author appears to have had in view, were the gods of their imagination only, his argument must fall of itself; and it would be losing time to say any thing more upon this head.—However, before I quit this author, I must take notice of two or three arguments more which he has used against the Christians, because they have been likewise copied by some modern authors, as well as by the emperor Julian, and been made the basis of a huge structure of reasoning.

If any of us should attempt, says Celsus, to convince them, that he whom they call the Son of God, is not his Son in particular, as God is the Father of all mankind; and that it is God alone whom we should adore; they would no longer be in the humour to adore him, unless that they adored at the same time this chief of their seditious cabal, to whom they give the

the title of the Son of God; not to shew thereby a greater respect to God, but to elevate this man as high as they can.—To prove this matter as clear as possible, and to avoid deviating from the point in proposing some of the articles of their belief, I will make use of their own words, which I have taken from a certain dialogue, which they call the Celestial Dialogue, where they express themselves in the following terms: “If
 “ the Son of God is more powerful than his Father,
 “ and nevertheless is submitted to the Son of Man,
 “ what other than the latter can be the master of the
 “ God who governs the world? How is it that there
 “ are so many persons upon the borders of the pit, and
 “ no person descends into it? How is it, that after
 “ having taken such a long journey, you want courage
 “ here? You are deceived, said the other; for I have
 “ courage, and I have a sword.” Does it not appear from hence, that their design is such as I have represented it? They suppose that there is another God above the heavens, who is the father of him whom they all adore: and in this manner, under pretence of serving the great God, they serve only the Son of Man, whom they have chosen for their patron, and who is, say they, the master of the God who governs the world, as being more powerful than him. This is the reason that they are so careful in teaching their followers not to serve two masters, to the end that their spirit of cabal may have no other object in view but him whom they adore.

I have stated the whole of this passage, to the end that my readers might see the force of the reasoning of this formidable enemy of the Christian

tian doctrine. It requires no great penetration to see that this celestial dialogue, as he is pleased to call it, is of his own invention; and the consequences which he draws from it, as he imagines, to injure the Christians, tend only to prove what he has before observed, respecting a plurality of gods.—We find, throughout the whole of this author's works, not only the marks of an inveterate hatred against the Christians, but also an uncommon zeal to promote the worship of the Grecian gods; and if Monsieur de Voltaire, and the rest of his admirers of our days, had, like the emperor Julian, in other respects, declared themselves advocates for promoting this form of worship, we should not be surprized to see them taking so much pains to recommend this author's persuasive and judicious reasoning.

I must state one more of his arguments, to shew my readers what ideas he had of the true philosophy of those days, and then I shall take my leave of him.—*There is not one satrap, lieutenant, general, civil governor, or even an officer of an inferior rank, who has any employment in the state of the king of Persia, or of the Roman emperor, who is not capable of doing much mischief to those who should be wanting in respect to him; and is it to be supposed, that these ministers or these satraps, who, under the God that governs the world, have the direction of the affairs of the earth and of the air, are so little to be feared by those who offend them?*

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Our author certainly should have known, that the principal of the Grecian philosophers held it as a maxim, that no wise man would do an injury to any person whatever; but, on the contrary, would endeavour to convert, and to correct those who had offended him. Plutarch tells us, that Lycurgus, when he had his enemy in his power, who had put out one of his eyes, was so far from endeavouring to revenge himself, that he was not at ease, till by gentle sollicitations he had brought this enemy to repent of his former bad conduct, and to become a philosopher. And Zeno, when one of his enemies declared *that he should die, if he was not revenged of him*; made him no other answer, than that, *I shall die, if I do not make thee my friend*.—The royal Psalmist, who was more ancient than either of those philosophers, in his prayer to God, says, “O Lord, my God, if I have
 “ done this; if there be any iniquity in my hands:
 “ if I have rewarded evil to him that dealt friendly
 “ with me; yea, I have delivered him that with-
 “ out any cause is mine enemy: then let mine
 “ enemy persecute my soul and take me; yea, let
 “ him tread my life down upon the earth, and lay
 “ mine honour in the dust*.”—But Jesus Christ says, “ Love your enemies, bless them that curse
 “ you, do good to them that hate you, and pray
 “ for them which despitefully use you, and perse-
 “ cute you; that ye may be the children of your
 “ Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his

• Psalm. vii. 3, 4, 5.

“fun to rise upon the just, and upon the unjust *.”—But Celsus pays a high compliment to the ministers or satraps, as he is pleased to call them, of the Great God, by insinuating, that they are less wise and more wicked than the Grecian philosophers. He should have considered, in writing this paragraph, that, according to the system of the philosophers of his own sect, the soul of every intelligent human being was created by the Great God and Father of all things, and was under his immediate protection; and consequently, could not have any thing to fear from those ministers, which he imagined had the direction of the affairs of the material world, it being, when divested of its material part, coequal with them, and owed them no kind of respect whatever. Jesus Christ says, “that we should not despise one of the least of the human species; for I say unto you, that in heaven their Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven †.”—Therefore, this argument of our author must be regarded, like the principal part of his other arguments, as contradicting the principles of the most learned philosophers of his own country, and absurd upon the face of it.

In fact the more we enquire into his works, the more we shall be discontented therewith; and, like the Epicureans, Stoicians, and Peripateticians, of his days, and the Materialists at present, we shall find him pretending to know all things, but prov-

* Matth. v. 44, 45.

† Matth. xviii. 10.

ing nothing.—One thing appears to be common to all those philosophers, and shews that they had at least some degree of judgment, which is, that they take great pains to contradict and ridicule each other. Each sect, and almost every respective person of that sect, has a different opinion; and they agree in nothing but to enter into disputes the one with the other.—Every modest and reasonable man will perceive, that the insufficiency of human understanding is the first cause of this great variety of opinions; and that pride is the second. The ancients, with the assistance of the jargon of metaphysics, pretended to decide upon every thing morally; the moderns decide every thing, by the laws of physics. Descartes formed the heavens and the earth with little balls; but he could never give the first motion to these balls, nor bring their centrifugal force into play, but with the assistance of a motion of rotation. Newton, by a more judicious reasoning, discovered the law of attraction; but attraction alone would soon have reduced the universe into an immoveable mass; and therefore, to this law, he found it necessary to add a centrifugal force, to keep the heavenly bodies in their proper orbits, and to prevent the different particles of matter from falling into each other. There is something apparently just and rational in the reasoning of this philosopher, and which will bear a critical enquiry. But how are we to judge of the opinion of some refined philosophers of our days, who contradict the laws of the modest

Newton

Newton, and affirm, with great positiveness, that all the motions of the heavenly bodies are the effects of electricity; and that the electric fire, like Jupiter's thunderbolts, is lanced from one part of the universe to the other, with an amazing rapidity, pervading all things, and animating all things?—But, as Descartes would have found it very difficult to tell us, by what physical law his tourbillons were turned, so will the philosophers of our days find it very difficult to inform us, how electricity, or the electric fire, produces the different motions of the heavenly bodies.

Certainly experimental physics lead us to the discovery of the only truths, respecting material bodies, that we are capable of comprehending: but such is the pride, and fertile imagination, of many enquirers, that they suffer themselves to be abused thereby, and, to the prejudice of their own reason, reject the dictates of this sure and useful guide. If those enquirers would limit their enquiries to such things as they were immediately interested to know, and as their faculties were capable of comprehending, and not inquiet themselves about the rest, we should no longer be disturbed by the imaginary systems of those pretended philosophers, whose pride and vanity have totally eclipsed their reason.

Every rational and diligent observer of nature will perceive that the world is governed by a wise and powerful Being, whose will was its first law, and who continues to direct every part of matter,
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by secondary laws, which were annexed thereto, when it first received its form: He will likewise perceive, that there is in man a free, intelligent, and reasoning principle, independent of matter, which not only gives him life and motion, but which soars to the heavens, and otherwise manifests itself to be of a spiritual nature; and consequently is capable of greater perfections than are consistent with mortality. By contemplating God in his works, and studying him by those attributes which we are interested in knowing, and which, from his great goodness, and universal benevolence to mankind, he has at different times vouchsafed to reveal unto us, we shall attain to more real wisdom and knowledge, than by all the imaginary, and I had almost said absurd systems, of those philosophers, who would impose their visionary speculations upon us, as the dictates of truth and reason.

One of the principal attributes of that spiritual and intelligent part which we discover within us, is, that of distinguishing good from evil: Conscience is the voice of the soul, as the passions are the voice of the body; and therefore it is not surprizing, that these two voices should sometimes contradict each other; and even that the latter, when we hearken too much to its persuasion, should totally overpower the former.—When they contradict each other, and when the latter has apparently reason on its side, it may be asked, To which then we should give ear?—As we suppose many things to be reasonable upon a first enquiry,
which

which afterwards turn out to be otherwise, and are thereby often deceived, we should be upon our guard against what we suppose to be the dictates of reason, before we have well examined them; but conscience never deceives us; she is our true guide, and is to the soul, what instinct is to the body: She is the judge of all our actions, and acquits or condemns us thereon; and if we would, in all things, obey her dictates, we should not fail to be happy.—There is therefore a principle of innate justice, and virtue, implanted in every human soul, whereby, notwithstanding our avowed opinions, we may judge whether our own actions, and as well those of others, are good, or evil. This is the heavenly voice which the Supreme Being has planted in every free and intelligent being, whose faculties are limited, to be his sure and unerring guide, and infallible judge of good and evil; and if mankind would always submit their opinions and their reasoning to her dictates, they could never err.

But the operations of the soul are united with, and often overpowered by, those of the body. We know not why the Supreme Being has limited the motions of this immortal principle, in this manner, and united them to those of a mortal body: but we are to suppose that it was for wise and good purposes. If the spirit of a man was free, and divested of its mortal part, it would undoubtedly be equal to an angel; it would love and obey the laws which the Supreme Being established, because
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it could have no interest in acting counter thereto. It would be happy, but not in so great a degree; as the glory of virtue, and the satisfaction of having overcome all the snares and temptations of this world would be wanting; because we have all reason to suppose, that a virtuous man will be more happy than the angels: His spirit, united to a mortal body, by powerful, but incomprehensible chains, is not only obliged to preserve this body, but to combat against all its irregularities and passions, which are sometimes extremely violent; as its eternal happiness in a great measure depends upon the care and assiduity with which it performs this arduous and penible task:—And, as we are told, “that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth,” we must certainly conclude, that a soul, who has led its mortal part virtuously through all the irregularities, temptations, and snares of this life, who has overcome the passions and wicked desires of the body, and who has established the empire of virtue therein, has merited a more transcendent degree of happiness and glory than the angels, who have never been exposed to such temptations.—How fully and clearly is this doctrine explained, not only by the Evangelists, but by St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews! There we may find the will of the Supreme Being, which he has vouchsafed to reveal unto mankind by Jesus Christ, explained; there we may see the dignity of human nature supported, against the poor and unintelligible jargon of those pretended

philosophers, who deny the providence of God, and who would put us upon a footing with the brute beasts; and all this in a manner not contradictory to human reason, but perfectly conformable to the cool reflection of every modest and intelligent being, and to the observation of every diligent and unprejudiced enquirer.

BUT there is another sect of philosophers, who have taken upon themselves to contradict the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, and who are by far more dangerous than either of those before mentioned; because they are modest, and moderate, and pretend to reason like men who would search after the truth, and who would lay themselves open to conviction; and these are the Deists; and, as many of them mean to make their studies subservient to the good of their fellow creatures, without any of that foolish vanity, and impertinence, peculiar to the other sects before mentioned, they are worthy of our most serious attention; and there is a real merit even in attempting to convince them of their errors.

In the first place, they seem to have some doubt respecting the facts contained in the Evangelists, and in the other parts of the New Testament; because they therein discover many things which are above human comprehension: And, moreover, as they acknowledge the great goodness and care which the Supreme Being has towards all his creatures, they suppose that, if they exercise
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the faculties which God has given them, and cultivate their reason, they are capable of themselves of knowing God, of loving him, of loving his works, and of pleasing him, and that there was no necessity for his revealing his will to a certain number of persons in one corner of the world; or, supposing that such a thing was necessary in that part of the world, the pretended obligation, that all the rest of mankind should be thoroughly informed therein, according to the Christian doctrines, is incompatible with the justice and goodness of God; and, very far from removing the difficulties which we meet with in the road to happiness and glory, tends rather to increase them, and to make this road unpassable to the greatest part of mankind.

This is the force of their reasoning upon this head: And, as there is at least some degree of plausibility therein, I shall endeavour, with great deference, to give a short but particular answer thereto.

And, first, I must beg leave to observe, that there is no part of ancient history which bears so clearly upon its face the marks of its authenticity, and where the facts are so well attested, as the New Testament: This book was wrote by a number of persons, whose goodness and piety were acknowledged by their enemies, who had no interest in what they wrote and taught, but the general good of mankind, and who sealed their testimony with their blood: Moreover the facts,

which are recorded in this book, are avowed by the enemies of Christianity, and all those ancient authors who have wrote against it; who never attempted to deny that Jesus Christ, and others in his name, did the great miracles which are recorded of them, but deny only the cause, or the power, whereby they were performed: and I must regard the testimony of such enemies, who were well acquainted with the facts, as incontrovertible:—The attributing those miracles to the power of magic, and I know not what other causes, is an argument so absurd in itself, that no sensible Deist will take it up at present; and I have already shewn my readers how well Celsus succeeded therein.

We discover in the New Testament, it is true, many things respecting the revealed will of the Deity, which are above human comprehension: But is it not the greatest degree of folly and presumption in us, to attempt to account for all the mysteries of the Deity, and to say that these things are not true, because we cannot comprehend them?—It was the opinion of Socrates, and of some others of the greatest philosophers of antiquity, as well as of the inspired writers, that revelation was necessary for the general good of mankind: And when we consult the history of the world, and even to this day regard those parts of this globe, where the Christian Religion has been rejected, or where it has never been preached, it will be seen that, although their civil govern-
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ment is, in many respects, worthy of imitation by the most enlightened nations, they are in a state of the grossest idolatry : that they have stifled the dictates of conscience, and made even their reason subservient to their passions. The Brachmans, the Magi, Pythagoras, Thales, Socrates, Plato, Zeno, and others, who were, strictly speaking, enquirers after truth, made but very little progress in discovering the attributes of the Divinity, and owned the insufficiency of their faculties for that purpose. And if those luminaries of antiquity, and those founders of moral principles in the heathen world, found themselves unequal to the task ; what are we to expect from the common race of mankind ?

Some of our modern Deists, who, through the lights of the Evangelical doctrine, have attained a degree of knowledge respecting those matters, that the ancients could never have acquired, pretend to approve such parts of this doctrine as come within their comprehension, and to reject the others.—Approve the whole, or reject the whole ; because, when we have the clearest and most positive proofs, that one part of a discourse is true, we have a strong presumptive proof that the other is so likewise, except we have some good evidence to prove the contrary.

There is no obligation, according to the doctrine of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, that all mankind should be thoroughly instructed in this doctrine, on pain of eternal punishment. St. Paul, in several

ral parts of his epistles, expressly teaches us the contrary : and that, if those people who have not had the opportunity of being instructed in the Christian doctrines, obey in all things the pure dictates of their conscience, they will be equally happy, through the merits of Jesus Christ, with those who have been instructed in, and obeyed his doctrine ; these being their gospel, and the laws whereby they will be tried. “ For,” says the great Apostle, “ when the Gentiles, who have not the “ law, do by nature the things contained in the “ law, these having not the law, are a law unto “ themselves, which shew the work of the law “ written in their hearts ; their conscience also “ bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean “ while accusing, or else excusing one another. “ By these they will be justified, in the day when “ God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus “ Christ, according to my gospel *.”—Hence, therefore, it was wrong in our Deists to have said, that this was an absolute obligation, that it was incompatible with the justice of God, and that it rendered the obstacles to salvation insurmountable to the greatest part of mankind.

A moderate Deist †, whose arguments are worthy our attention, expresses himself in the following manner.—“ I must confess to you, that the “ majesty of the scriptures astonishes me ; and the “ holiness of the Evangelists speaks unto my heart, “ and has such strong and striking characters of “ truth, and is moreover so perfectly inimitable,

* Rom. ii. 14, 15, 16. † J. J. Rousseau *Emile*. vol. iii. p. 117.

“ that if it had been the invention of men, the
 “ inventors would be greater than the greatest he-
 “ roes. But after all, this evangelical doctrine is
 “ full of things which cannot be believed, of
 “ things which are repugnant to reason, and which
 “ it is impossible for any sensible man to con-
 “ ceive, or to admit.”—This is also the language
 of the principal part of the moderate Deists of our
 days, who regard the Christian religion merely as
 a civil institution, which is necessary, in every
 country, to regulate uniformly the public worship
 of the Deity ; and which may be altered according
 to the nature of the climate, the genius of the
 people, and the form of their civil government.—
 A doctrine of this kind, apparently so moderate,
 and so reasonable, tends more to destroy the prin-
 ciples of the Christian religion, and to corrupt the
 manners of the mass of the people, who have not
 penetration enough to discover its bad tendency,
 than the writings of all the philosophers, from the
 enlightened Plato to the vulgar Materialist. A
 person who has no great talents may discover, by
 common observation, that the latter, with all their
 pretended reasoning, tend to precipitate, as it were,
 mankind into a chaos of errors and confusion ;
 but the plausibility and moderation of the former
 lead us insensibly into a kind of neutral state ;—
 from whence our passions, now without any con-
 troul, plunge us into all kinds of excesses.

When we examine these deistical arguments with
 attention, we shall find that there is a manifest

contradiction therein. "The holiness of the Evangelists speaks unto the heart; and has such strong and striking characters of truth, that it is perfectly inimitable. But after all, this doctrine cannot be believed, because it contains many things which we cannot comprehend, and is repugnant to reason." It were much to be wished, that the favourers of this doctrine would point out to us a criterion, whereby we may distinguish what is, and what is not, repugnant to reason. When I read a work, which as it were captivates my judgment, fills me with a kind of awe, manifests strong and striking characters of truth, and appears to be in other respects perfectly inimitable, I own that it would be the highest presumption in me, after cool reflection, to say that this work is repugnant to reason, because there are some parts thereof which are above my comprehension; as the characteristics of truth are, at all times, the strongest characteristics of reason; the latter being only our guide to lead us to the former. But besides these characters, which our Deists have given of the evangelical doctrine, as I have already observed, the facts therein contained are not only set forth in the most simple and artless manner, but are attested even by its enemies; and therefore must be regarded as incontrovertible.

If we introduce the doctrine of Jesus Christ and his Apostles only as a civil institution, which I must confess is but too much the case in many parts of Europe, and make them subservient to the

the genius of the people, and to the nature of the climate ; the mass of the people may thereby be kept in a kind of temporal fear : But this is not sufficient to make them honest and good Christians.—It is true, our modern governments owe their solidity and permanency to the Christian religion, which has rendered them much less bloody and tyrannical, and much less subject to revolutions ; and this is clearly proved, by comparing them with the ancient governments.

Since the mass of the people have been more generally instructed in the pure moral of this religion and have as it were surmounted the fanaticism, bigotry, and tyranny of the priests, they are become more civilized, and their manners are softened. Many have supposed, that this change has been brought about by learning and philosophy : but the history of the world teaches us the contrary ; for where philosophy and letters shined the most, in all ages, humanity was the least respected. The cruelties of the Greeks, and particularly of the Athenians, of the Egyptians, of the Romans, of the Persians, of the Babylonians, and of the Chinese, place this matter out of all doubt. Mercy, charity, and benevolence, are the works of the gospel, and so are brotherly love, and forgiveness. And notwithstanding what has been objected, on one side, by a set of interested and ignorant priests, and on the other, by a number of superficial philosophers, every sensible and impartial man must confess, that nothing has tended,
and

and that nothing actually tends, so much to introduce humanity and brotherly affection among mankind in general, and to correct and soften their manners, as their being thoroughly instructed in their youthful days, in the pure moral and principles of the Christian religion.—Even the fanaticism and bigotry, which heretofore prevailed among mankind, by the instigation of the different orders of a wretched clergy, who made a trade of their religion, and set themselves up the one against the other, although their immediate effects were more dreadful than what is generally called the philosophic spirit of our days, in their consequences they will be found to be much less so.

A philosopher gives you a long and elaborate theory, which is not only impracticable in itself, but which he never had any idea of practising; his own vanity and ambition being the only objects which he had in view.—Regard this matter in any light, and it will be seen, that the principles of philosophy cannot do any good, but what may be much better done by the principles of the Christian doctrines; and the latter does much that the former cannot do. Although the greatest part of the Christian world do not follow strictly the principles which were laid down by Jesus Christ and his Apostles; yet these principles are the motives which hinder those who are instructed therein from doing of evil, and which lead them to do many good and virtuous actions, which they would not otherwise have done. On the other hand, a philosopher,

philosopher, I mean according to the idea which many have annexed to that word, becomes incredulous from the abuse which he makes of his own knowledge. He thinks it is degrading to be of the same opinion with the vulgar; his pride and vanity lead him to despise every sentiment which is commonly received among mankind; as a blind devotion leads insensibly to enthusiasm and bigotry.

Every prudent and impartial enquirer will, therefore, avoid both extremities; will be modest in his enquiries, will submit even his reason to the dictates of his conscience, will try all things, and hold fast that which is good, and will never reject a well-attested fact, because it is above his comprehension; but will always submit his own judgment to the general opinion of mankind; especially when there is nothing in that opinion which tends to evil, and when every part thereof appears to be calculated for universal good.

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